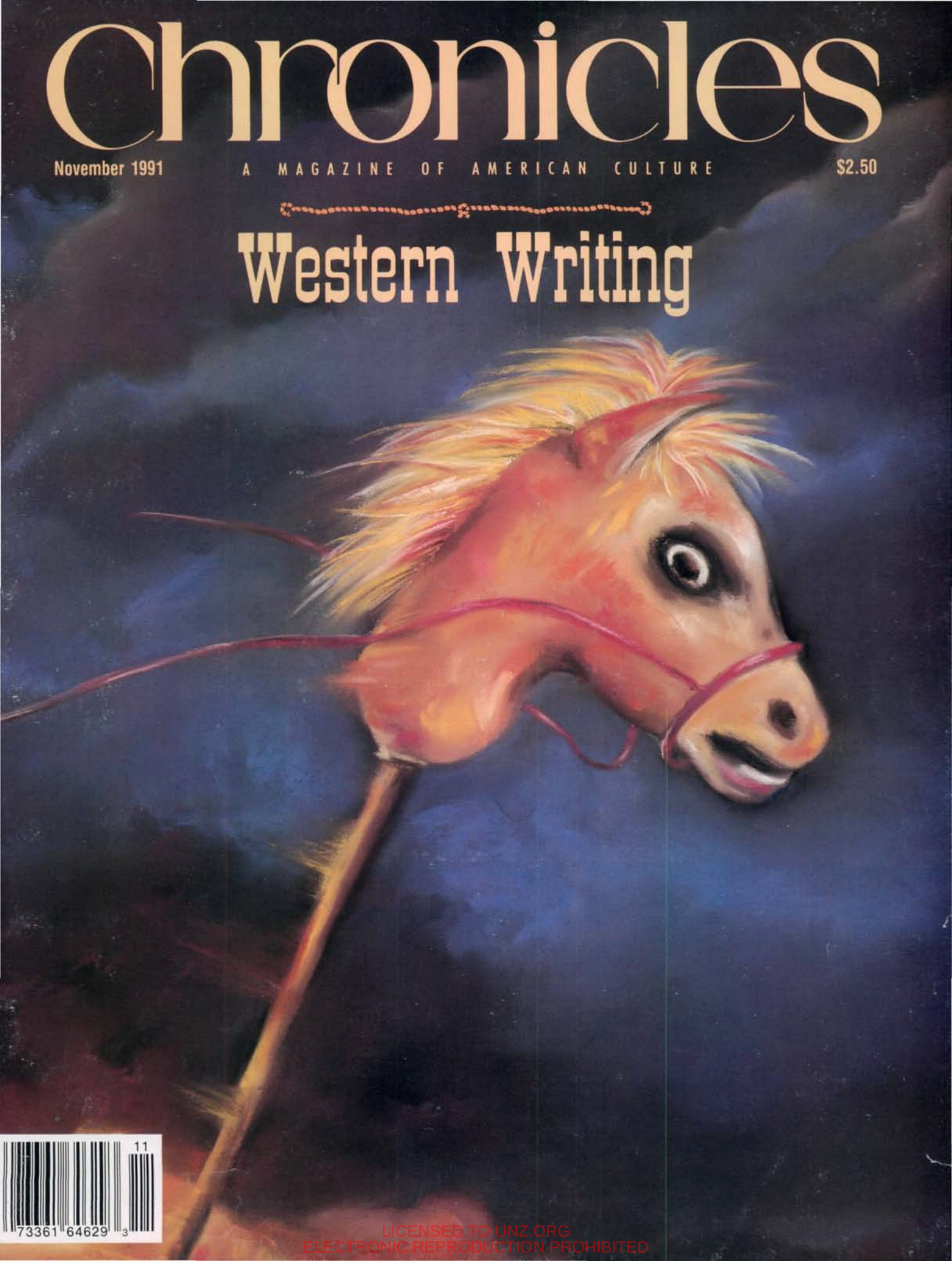
Chronicles

November 1991 A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE $2.50

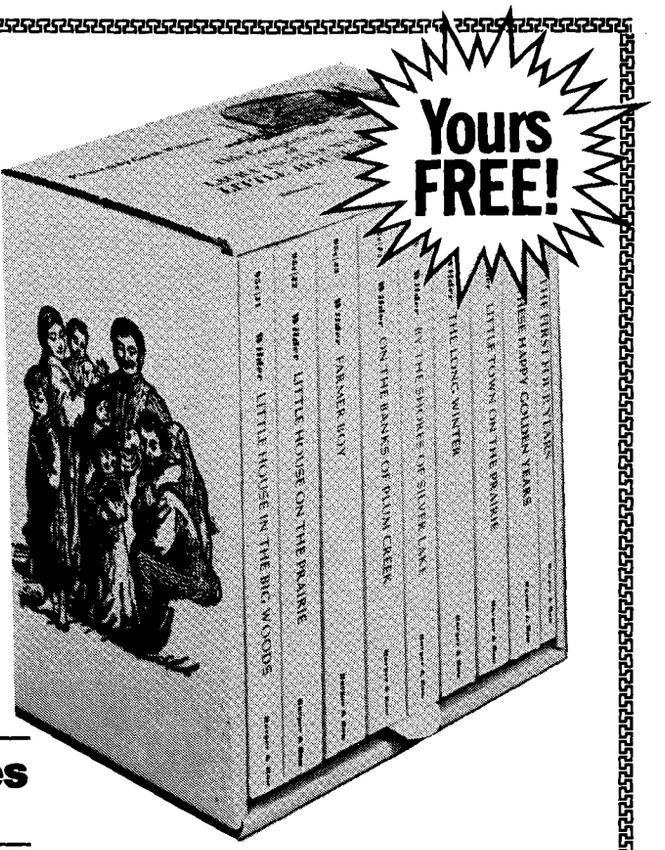
Western Writing



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The finest firsthand picture of American pioneer life ever written for children."

—San Francisco Chronicle


Yours FREE!
THE FIRST FOUR YEARS
THESE HAPPY GOLDEN YEARS
LITTLE TOWN ON THE PRAIRIE
THE LONG WINTER
BY THE SHORES OF SILVER LAKE
ON THE BANKS OF PLUM CREEK
FARMER BOY
LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE
LITTLE HOUSE IN THE BIG WOODS

The LITTLE HOUSE Stories

by Laura Ingalls Wilder

Retail $29.95 • 9 quality paperbacks in handsome illustrated slipcase

Beloved by children for generations, these books portray an America where family, hard work and traditional values were taken for granted. Each volume includes Garth Williams' charming illustrations that first appeared in the 1953 editions. Every volume in the series is here, including *The First Four Years*, first published in 1971:

Little House in the Big Woods ★ Little House on the Prairie ★ Farmer Boy ★ On the Banks of Plum Creek ★ By the Shores of Silver Lake ★ The Long Winter ★ Little Town on the Prairie ★ These Happy Golden Years ★ The First Four Years

Show Your Children a Better America

"One of the phenomenal achievements in modern literature for children, a genuine chronicle of American life and of family life at their equal best. Through these books Laura Ingalls of the 1870's and '80's has stepped from the pages of the past into the flesh and blood reality of a chosen friend."—*The Horn Book*

"Any boy or girl who has access to all the books in the series will be the richer for their firsthand record of pioneer life in the opening West and for their warm-hearted human values."—*New Yorker*

"It is a matter of great satisfaction and a cause for gratitude that we can turn to such a group of stories as those of Mrs. Wilder. They ring true in every particular. Their authentic background, sensitive characterization, their fine integrity and spirit of sturdy independence, make them an invaluable addition to our list of genuine American stories."—*New York Times*

How to get this 9-volume $29.95 set FREE

How the Club Works

Every 4 weeks (13 times a year) you get a free copy of the Club Bulletin which offers you the Featured Selection plus a good choice of Alternates — all of interest to conservatives. ★ If you want the Featured Selection, do nothing, it will come automatically. ★ If you don't want the Featured Selection, or you do want an Alternate, indicate your wishes on the handy card enclosed with your Bulletin and return it by the deadline date. ★ The majority of Club books will be offered at 20-50% discounts, plus a charge for shipping and handling. ★ As soon as you buy and pay for 3 books at regular Club prices, your membership may be ended at any time, either by you or by the Club. ★ If you ever receive a Featured Selection without having had 10 days to decide if you want it, you may return it at Club expense for full credit. ★ Good service. No computers! ★ The Club will offer regular Superbargains, mostly at 70-90% discounts plus shipping and handling. Superbargains do NOT count toward fulfilling your Club obligation, but do enable you to buy fine books at giveaway prices. ★ Only one membership per household.

CONSERVATIVE BOOK CLUB

15 OAKLAND AVENUE • HARRISON, N.Y. 10528

Please accept my membership in the Club and send, FREE and postpaid, the *Little House* set by Laura Ingalls Wilder — all 9 volumes in the $29.95 slipcased set. I agree to buy 3 additional books at regular Club price over the next 18 months. I also agree to the Club rules spelled out in this coupon. CCUL-75

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

"It takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature."
—Henry James

PERSPECTIVE

Western Is as Western Does 12
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.
The distinctive quality of Western fiction.

VIEWS

The Garden of Alejandra Ruiz by Kent Nelson 14
A short story.

Big Little House in American Literature by Chilton Williamson, Jr. 20
A reappraisal of the work of Laura Ingalls Wilder.

Inscribing the American Frontier 26
by A. Carl Bredahl
Why Western narrative is so American.

OPINIONS

Imagining the West by M.E. Bradford 32
Western Writers Series, edited by Wayne Chatterton and James H. Maguire. Surveying the series published by Boise State University.

REVIEWS

Geoffrey Wagner praises Noel Annan's *Our Age: English Intellectuals Between the World Wars* 35
◆ **Thomas Fleming** recommends the latest volume of Peter Russell's poems ◆ Michael E. Henstock's *Fernando de Lucia, Son of Naples* is a worthy contribution to the history of music, writes **J.O. Tate** ◆

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter From the Frontier: Ranchwomen, Life, and Literature by Stephen Bodio 39

Letter From Italy: There and Back Again 41
by Thomas Fleming

Letter From the Lower Right: A Good Job for the Federal Government 44
by John Shelton Reed

VITAL SIGNS

Plundered Province: The American West as Literary Region 46
by Gregory McNamee

Notes From a Writer of Trash 48
by Richard S. Wheeler

DEPARTMENTS

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES 4

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS 6

PRINCIPALITIES & POWERS 10
by Samuel Francis

POETRY
The Morning You Came to the Hayfield, 19
The Dark Fields, 31
and *The Watch* 34
by Brad Omanson

On the State's New Divorce Law 25
by Richard Moore

ON THE COVER

Cover by Jan Vandenbiesen.

NOVEMBER 1991/3

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITOR
Thomas Fleming

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Theodore Pappas

SENIOR EDITOR, BOOKS
Chilton Williamson, Jr.

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Emily Grant Adams

ART DIRECTOR
Anna Mycek-Wodecki

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
John W. Aldridge, Harold O.J. Brown, Samuel Francis, George Garrett, Russell Kirk, E. Christian Kopff, Clyde Wilson

CORRESPONDING EDITORS
Janet Scott Barlow, Odie Faulk, Jane Greer, John Shelton Reed

EDITORIAL SECRETARY
Leann Dobbs

PUBLISHER
Allan C. Carlson

PUBLICATION DIRECTOR
Guy C. Reffett

COMPOSITION MANAGER
Anita Fedora

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Rochelle Frank

A publication of The Rockford Institute.
Editorial and Advertising Offices: 934 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103.
Editorial Phone: (815) 964-5054.
Advertising Phone: (815) 964-5811.
Subscription Department: P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054. Call 1-800-877-5459.
For information on advertising in *Chronicles*, please call Cathy Corson at (815) 964-5811.

U.S.A. Newsstand Distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Road, Sandusky, OH 44870.

Copyright © 1991 by The Rockford Institute. All rights reserved.

Chronicles (ISSN 0887-5731) is published monthly for $24 per year by The Rockford Institute, 934 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103-7061. Second-class postage paid at Rockford, IL and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Chronicles*, P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054.

The views expressed in *Chronicles* are the authors' alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Rockford Institute or of its directors. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

◆

Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Vol. 15, No. 11 November 1991

On 'Middle American Revolution'

Quo vadis Middle American anger? Several of Sam Francis' most recent *Chronicles* contributions have alluded to a "Middle American Revolution." In his January "Principalities & Powers," Francis was kind enough to directly cite my book, *The Radical Center*, which was based on extensive research into the significant social roots of the George Wallace candidacy and his rise to national prominence in the late 1960's and early 70's. A central conclusion of that volume was the identification of "Middle American Radicals" (MARs) as a potent, yet seemingly unpredictable force in American politics whose capture—first in the Carter campaign of 1976 and then by the Reagan-Bush dynasty—has given notice of the disintegration of the New Deal base of the Democratic Party.

Francis speaks of the need for any would-be leader of MARs to formulate "a comprehensive myth" that could "raise this proletariat from a passive state of disgruntlement to being an active force of social and political power." He notes that this cannot be in the form of any existing orthodoxy, whether "paleoconservative, traditionalist or libertarian," but must be "new." The old order has been riven asunder.

Will the grip of George Bush's New World Order be capable of retaining MAR loyalty for 1992? While I dare not prophesy, my analysis of the forces now emerging in America in the early 1990's is one that must eschew both paleo- and neoconservative labels and, instead, adopt the populist base which I feel is so very well embodied in the ideals and goals of *Chronicles* itself. I see in the writings of Tom Fleming and in the refreshing iconoclastic "radicalism" of such contributors as Francis, Chilton Williamson, Jr. and John Shelton Reed a break from an intellectual elitism whose very promulgation is the basis of MAR anger. There will be no MAR revolution until there is a fundamental shift in the definition of American politics away from "left" or "right." So long as establishment political science persists in retaining a totally obsolete and outmoded scale of political reckoning—an unidimensional marker barely suitable for the beginning of the 20th century, let alone the dawn of the 21st—we shall misread the signposts of the time.

What is crucial to a grasp of American political identity today is the same schism that is to be found in every "advanced industrial," "emerging," or "Third World" nation: the breakdown of allegiance to any national political elite. This disintegration, now so evident in Eastern Europe and emerging as well in Western Europe (and certainly in North America) is the merging of individualism with economic aspirations (or actual gains) with a deep distrust of central government.

While I do not claim to know the exact course this trend shall follow, it is my guess as a student of the MAR phenomenon that, to be successful, it must be a force that creates a "third way" by means of a charismatic leader possessing effective organizational skills and who has the full trust of urban Catholics, rural Protestants, and those with a traditional religious commitment of any form. What unites these otherwise disparate elements of American society is their opposition to the concepts of pluralism, class struggle, and the belief that they have become the most victimized "minority group" of all.

—*Donald Warren*
Ann Arbor, MI

On 'Christopher Lasch'

Llewellyn Rockwell's review (August 1991) of *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* by Christopher Lasch contains much that's worth saying, both pro and con, about Professor Lasch and his opus. However, the critique falls apart at the end, when the reviewer attempts to distill his observations upon the fires of theology.

In all of Christianity there may be no doctrine more misrepresented than

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that of the total depravity of human nature. To equate this with a belief in the impossibility of progress is mistaken. The only point the doctrine makes against "works" is that they do not avail toward salvation. Good works are not, therefore, impossible. They become inevitable, indeed abundant, as the overflow of gratitude for a salvation already freely given to the believer by the grace of God through the person and work of Jesus Christ. This forms the *genuine* context in which our works ought to take place, in which works can truly be good.

Mr. Rockwell is free to believe in the alternative to total depravity—call it something-less-than-total depravity—but the point is that the former is no gloomy doctrine. It is, rather, a deep recognition that we must confront the bad news if we are to embrace the good. In this, we are given no brief to take perverse satisfaction over the corrupt motivations of others, as our own sinfulness remains clearly in focus. At root, total depravity should not engender pessimism but, quite the contrary, affirm the sovereignty of God. Progress is possible. If it comes, it is God's hand that sets it in motion, and He would graciously have us participate in it. Whether all that's done in the name of progress glorifies God is quite another thing.

If Professor Lasch's opposition to progress is properly grounded in Calvinism, as you suggest—and we certainly shouldn't preclude other explanations—it would stem from this point. Does that which we label progress glorify God or glorify man? Total depravity helps us ask the question, rather than dictating the answer beforehand.

—Joel S. Parshall
Pittsburgh, PA

While Lew Rockwell's review was interesting, his theological conclusion was, if not inaccurate, at least in need of some evidence. Perhaps Rockwell believes that Calvinism's pessimism has been dominant in history despite its other doctrines. Well, that may be true, but I would certainly like to read his argument to that effect. Given the existence of Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, and the visible difference in standard of living between North America and South America, I don't think I am asking too much to expect Rockwell to justify his position instead of merely asserting it. John Calvin, after all, was a committed follower of Saint Augustine—whom Rockwell quotes favorably on progress—and subscribed to his view of history. Rockwell's quoting of Augustine is almost as ironic as his mention of the "Founders' vision." Though the Founding Fathers were hardly Puritans, does Rockwell believe that it was Catholic theology that dominated the colonies during the previous century?

Rockwell's reference to John Paul II's latest encyclical hardly justifies his claims. He himself admits in his newsletter that Pope Leo XIII "adopted the then-fashionable Marxist framework" in 1891. I find it questionable that in *Chronicles* Rockwell says the recent encyclical "makes clear" the connection between free-markets and "conservative culture" without mentioning this quasi-Marxian tradition in the Church that has helped keep the connection unclear for at least a century. If anyone thinks I am being too harsh, he should read Rockwell's analysis of *Centesimus Annus*, where he states that it "effectively repudiates such nonsense" as the "socialist libel of the industrial revolution," which Pope Leo XIII had accepted. If he were to admit in his book review as he does in his newsletter that *Centesimus Annus* was a break with Catholic tradition, then his case for Catholicism's relationship to human progress would appear a lot less credible.

I do not mean to imply that Calvinism has been the source of all progress and freedom. It hasn't. Nor do I mean to imply that the Catholic Church has not been a cause of progress and increased freedom throughout the world. She has. I do hope, however, that future endorsements of Roman Catholic theology and culture will be well-argued and well-supported with evidence, not simply thrown at Protestants as insults.

—Mark A. Horne
Oakland Park, FL

Mr. Rockwell Replies:

How is stating and then disagreeing with a tenet of another religion an insult? Have conservatives, too, gone soft in the ecumenical mush? If one regards man's nature as totally depraved, so that good works apart from God are impossible, how could one *not* take a dark view of the possibility of human progress?

Calvinists have also taken a dim view of human culture, which—in Weber's words—they saw as being of "no use toward salvation" and tending to "promote sentimental illusion and idolatrous superstitions." Whether progress occurs under Calvinist social regimes is another matter, but Calvinists cannot take much comfort in Weber's thesis about capitalism and their faith.

Weber saw Calvinists' striving for economic success as "the necessity of proving one's faith in worldly activity." This led, he thought, to a radically works-based salvation in practice, if not formal theology: "The God of Calvinism demanded of his believers not single good works, but a life of good works combined into a unified system." (In contrast, Weber called Catholicism a "very human" system that embraced the "cycle of sin, repentance, atonement, release, followed by renewed sin.")

To Weber, the attempt to demonstrate one's salvific status led, unintendedly, to savings, investment, and entrepreneurship. Since this attempt contradicted official teachings, however, Calvinist societies have tended to apologize for their economic progress. Calvin himself believed that grace was entirely unmerited, and while election was self-evident to the believer, no one could distinguish election in others using works or any other criterion, nor should one try to do so.

Note: *Centesimus Annus* does represent a break from *Rerum Novarum*, but not from traditional Church teaching. Many of the scholastics, for example, held radically free-market views. It is this century that is the anomaly.

For Immediate Service
CHRONICLES
NEW SUBSCRIBERS
TOLL FREE NUMBER
1-800-877-5459

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE BOTCHED COUP in the Soviet Union should have been an occasion for somber reflections. For a few days it appeared that U.S. foreign policy, built almost entirely around the person of Mikhail Gorbachev, might be in ruins. The failure of the plot, while it has temporarily restored Mr. Gorbachev's fortunes, could not disguise the pitiable condition into which a great empire had fallen. Here it was, the great state apparatus which, a decade ago, had made the world tremble, now reduced to impotence in the face of a blustering demagogue with a drinking problem. It was more like a minor episode in the history of Montenegro than a major chapter in an imperial chronicle. The American press, which never gets anything right, could only stir up paranoia over who had his hand on the big button.

The lighter side of the coup was provided by President Bush, who kept on insisting that Mr. Gorbachev's overthrow was "unconstitutional." All these years, Republicans had been insisting that the Soviet government was a despotism or, more recently, an evil empire. Mr. Bush himself had even signed up as an advocate of democratic globalism, a crusade based on the Wilsonian premise that the only legitimate regimes are those that have been democratically elected. We must have been dozing when Gorbachev won an election, because it is our recollection that he gained his power the old-fashioned way: he seized it. Like Stalin and Brezhnev and Andropov, Gorbachev owed his position not to the will of the people but to the decision of a few hard-eyed men who pulled the strings. Some of those men, not so hard-eyed as their predecessors, had evidently decided that what the Politburo gives, the Politburo can also take away.

It is hard not to feel some sympathy for the plotters. The restoration of a hard-line regime would put an end to plans for a Western bail-out of the Soviet economy. During the period when the coup's success seemed likely, *Il Sabato* interviewed Gianfranco Miglio, the hard-boiled political scientist at the Catholic University of Milan. Professor Miglio was frank enough to say what many of us were thinking: "Why should we tear our clothes? The West would have had to furnish Gorbachev with unlimited assistance. A blood-letting with disastrous economic results."

Even American optimists realize that the same President who taught us lip-reading is now saying that we won't, repeat won't provide direct financial assistance, but to save his old friend Mr. Gorbachev and his new friend Mr. Yeltsin, George Bush will find it impossible not to be generous with other people's money. If only those bunglers had succeeded!

Actually, the Washington politicians of the jointly ruling party in power should have appreciated the position in which their Communist counterparts had found themselves. All that talk of reform was fine, so long as it promised greater efficiency and Western trade credits, but this business of autonomy for the republics was too much. Under the proposed unity agreement, the republics would have reassumed a large measure of control over their own taxes. But with the collapse of the coup (if that is the proper name for what looks more to be an attempt to blackmail Gorbachev), the rate of imperial disintegration was hastened.

Revolutions, even if they are stage-managed in the beginning, take on a life of their own. The French Revolution began as a coup by the upper classes who wanted to wrest power away from the king and torpedo his reforms. They quickly lost control. What defines a revolution (even a peaceful one) is not the aims of the architects but a hidden agenda that only reveals itself in the unfolding of events. When Gorbachev was only talking about reform and openness, the ethnic minorities of the U.S.S.R. went on a rampage, and when an attempt was made to curb Gorbachev's democratic reforms, the really important response has been the declarations of independence issued by republic after republic. As of late August, Yeltsin was already getting nervous. Wait until the autonomous regions of his own federation begin to get restive. Yeltsin the democrat will be replaced by Yeltsin the nationalist, just as Stalin the Communist turned into the defender of Holy Mother Russia.

Americans, meanwhile, rejoiced at the discomfiture of the hard-liners, without stopping to wonder why we can't have the same deal over here. Autonomy and local government are nothing less than justice in Estonia, but what about South Dakota or Alabama? We call them states, after all, and the federal "Republic" agreed to by our ancestors accorded all the states something like sovereignty within their borders. If even the evil empire is willing to concede some measure of local autonomy to its constituent republics, why can't the good empire do the same? Ah, but there is a vital difference between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. Over there, some of the citizens at least want their freedom, and they want it so badly that they are willing to stand up to tanks. We, on the other hand, prefer the cozy comforts of servitude, and confine our rebellion to letters to the editor or the endless stream of little reports issued by think tanks.

Perhaps the obvious parallelism between their "captive republics" and ours explains the reluctance of George Bush and so many "conservatives" to recognize the independence of the Baltic states. Political liberty has a way of spreading. Today Vilnius, tomorrow —Raleigh?

—*Thomas Fleming*

TITLE X FUNDS to "family planning" clinics that dispense abortion counseling were prohibited last summer as a result of the *Rust* v. *Sullivan* U.S. Supreme Court decision, which single-issue organizations indignantly denounced. It is ironic that the very people who claim that government should stay out of abortion decisions are the very same people who want government to *pay* for them. Their outcry prompted Congress to overturn the ruling and fund such clinics. As President Bush contemplates a veto, multi-issue taxpayers would like to in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quire: do these clinics really *deserve* federal funds?

For starters, the full-page newspaper ads and expensive, five-color fundraising letter distributed by the chief recipient of these funds, the Planned Parenthood Federation, might tempt the average taxpayer to just say no. Without a doubt, tax dollars have freed millions of private dollars raised by this special interest group (using its tax-deductible status, another subsidy) for slick marketing campaigns to lobby Congress and the public. But further investigation reveals the *real* reason these groups call the Court's decision the "gag rule": they gagged when they realized how many millions of dollars they would lose if the ruling were not overturned.

Planned Parenthood, which led the charge against the decision, is the preeminent example. In 1987, Planned Parenthood's annual report revealed that its affiliates' income was $249.5 million, of which $111.2 million was furnished by federal, state, and local government reimbursements. Currently, $37 million annually goes to these affiliates from Title X, and due to the way federal block grants are administered, Planned Parenthood has been able to obtain hundreds of millions through 19 different appropriations measures, including Medicaid, Title V, Title XIX, and Title XX.

The organization and its affiliates operate the nation's largest chain of abortion facilities. In the early 1980's, the U.S. General Accounting Office reported that Planned Parenthood clinics had a 50 percent higher abortion-referral rate than other, similar clinics. The Federation's 1989 *Service Report* reveals that this chain performed over 111,000 abortions in 1988 and made referrals for 100,000 more. Those numbers had significantly escalated in the 1980's: from 1977 through 1986, the number of affiliates doing abortions increased by 68 percent, and the number of abortions performed increased by 85 percent. Some affiliates also perform more expensive, later-term abortions. Based on its published abortion data and other statistics collected by survey, Planned Parenthood affiliates received approximately $21.1 million in income from performing abortions alone in 1986. Using current figures, that abortion income is now estimated at around $30 million annually.

One-third of Title X clients are adolescents. Planned Parenthood affiliates routinely dispense contraceptive devices, abortion referrals, and, in most states, perform abortions without parental consent or even knowledge. Nationwide, Planned Parenthood has angrily lobbied against efforts to require parental notice before abortions are performed on underage clients. When the U.S. Senate recently passed a popular amendment calling for parental notification for minors in the Chafee Title X funding measure, Planned Parenthood called it "heinous" and sought its repeal.

There is evidence that the "poor" the organization claims to assist include a large number of young, non-poor girls who are financially supported by their parents. Information obtained from clients and clinic records reveals that there are instances where counselors have declared these younger girls "indigent" based on the fact that they have no sizable income of their own. Thus, taxpayers also foot the bill for these "indigent" clients through Title XX. For example, Planned Parenthood claims that it helps four million "poor" women annually. However, using figures gathered from a report by its Alan Guttmacher Institute, in 1983 only 13 percent of all family planning clinics were welfare recipients.

There is other evidence that cash-paying clients pay one rate for pregnancy tests, contraceptive services, or family planning counseling, while government-subsidized clients pay *higher* rates—at taxpayer expense. Although each affiliate sets its own billing schedules, clinic records obtained from a Texas affiliate by demographer Robert H. Ruff reveal that cash-paying patients paid 32 dollars for an initial birth control visit, while government-subsidized clients paid 77 dollars; a cash-paid pregnancy test cost 16 dollars, while the government-paid pregnancy test cost 57 dollars; cash clients paid 40 dollars for an annual birth control check-up, but government-subsidized clients paid 85 dollars. When the government pays, the "services" are two to four times more expensive.

Are "family planning" clinics effective in preventing pregnancies and abortions, as Planned Parenthood has claimed? In a significant study of family planning clients reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, Dr. Stan Weed summarized these findings: "As the number and proportion of teenage family planning clients increased, we observed a corresponding increase in the teenage pregnancy and abortion rates: 50 to 120 more pregnancies per thousand clients, rather than the 200 to 300 fewer pregnancies as estimated by researchers. . . . We did find that greater teenage participation in such clinics led to lower teen birthrates. However, the impact on the abortion and pregnancy rates was exactly opposite the stated intention of the program. The original problems appear to have grown worse."

Whenever clients undergo abortions, they also routinely receive contraception and family planning counseling. However, Planned Parenthood's own data (in *Family Planning Perspectives*) reveals that fully 43 percent of all abortions are *repeat* abortions. The Center for Disease Control reports that one out of seven women undergoing abortions acknowledge having *two or more* previous abortions —for another 5.7 percent of all abortions. A failure rate of nearly 50 percent is grounds for rethinking any public policy.

Finally, an important footnote about the disingenuous claim of "gagging" doctors. In these family planning clinics, unlike private practices, the clients are advised by "counselors," who are sometimes volunteers, and *not* doctors. The distinctive feature of such clinics is that they are designed like assembly lines to handle high volume, and most clients never even see the doctor until they are on the surgical table. Yet these doctors make huge profits, and some of them admit that they left obstetrics because abortion was considerably more profitable and less trouble.

If defense contractors are to be accountable, then so should domestic "contractors." If Congress is going to spend scarce revenues for domestic programs, then the public wants the money to go to the *truly* needy, and for programs that work. And concerning tax funds for clinics, the average multi-issue taxpayer would agree: Planned Parenthood's lucrative operations are no more "entitled" to scarce federal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dollars than were the defense contractors who sold Uncle Sam those exorbitantly priced toilet seats in the 1980's.

—*Anne Marie Morgan*

GUNS AND RAPE are often deplored in the public prints as two of our nation's worst plagues. One may be the cure for the other. Denver, for instance, is at the mercy of a serial rapist. It is increasingly clear that the police, if not exactly helpless, cannot cope with the massive violence that is a symptom of the social pathology of contemporary America. They have enough on their hands doing the job they have assigned themselves: giving parking tickets, setting up checkpoints for drunk drivers, patrolling the adult movie theaters of Sarasota, Florida, and showing themselves sensitive to the domestic quarrels of Jeffrey Dahmer and his dates. Anyway, the Denver rapist gets to his victims by entering open windows and unlocked doors—frequent in warm weather. Although in the 60's the mayor of New York used to put a policeman in every subway car on occasion, a policeman in every house would probably be too much for most Americans.

That leaves one alternative: self-defense. As George Mason tried to remind us in the Virginia Declaration of Rights, a well-regulated militia is necessary to the security of a free state, and by militia he meant the armed citizenry. The police cannot rescue Americans from the wave of violence now drowning them. Denver needs a statute that insists that all women must be armed. Failure to carry a gun or keep one at home or residence would be punishable by a small fine, like a traffic ticket. Licenses for keeping and bearing a gun would be issued to all women after they pass a simple written and practical examination, just as for driving a car. The law would include a provision that there would be no checks on the possession of a gun except in the case of a crime of violence. There would be no harassment of women who chose not to carry guns, except for a small fine when an act of violence was committed. Rapists would know that all law-abiding women were keeping and bearing arms. The law would contain a Sunshine clause that would guarantee a review after five years. If Denver were still as violent as before, the law would fall into desuetude.

Experience and the theory of republican government suggest that rapists and other violent men would avoid Denver and betake themselves to a safer habitat. The licensing provision would help to ensure that our armed citizenry was well-regulated. Before long, perhaps even men would be permitted to participate. Women who preferred to rely on police could always move to Minneapolis or New York City.

Look upon it as a social experiment. Are there aspects of republican government that can prove useful and vital in the empire that our political class has created? I know your objection. What will happen to our system if any substantial plurality of our subjects learn that they can take care of themselves? You may be right. It may be too horrible to contemplate.

—*E. Christian Kopff*

HOMELESSNESS was the subject of a task force recently established by the mayor and county board of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Its purpose was "to develop mechanisms and a philosophy of care that will break down the barriers to becoming 'un-homeless,' so that these people are given the opportunity to pursue stable and productive lives in this 'America's most livable city.'" Not surprisingly, the task force concluded in a report last summer that Tulsa could best help the homeless by receiving more state, local, and federal moneys for more social programs.

Most interesting are the vignettes of the homeless that the report highlighted. "Nathan" uses drugs, describes himself as "rebellious," has been arrested for burglary, and says he is looking for work but would never accept a minimum-wage job. "Angel" could not "stand being around her husband and child anymore" and so "made a choice to leave and become homeless." She smokes dope every day, takes speed three times a week, describes herself as "stubborn and rebellious," and says "being homeless is OK." "Foreman" abandoned his wife and four kids, sifts through garbage for food, and has spent 17 years in prison for shooting two police officers. "Alfred" chose to become homeless when he left his wife and kids because he "no longer wanted to be tied down" and discovered "he could make more money stealing." He mugs indigent women for their food stamps and "finds himself thinking about hurting other people."

It is safe to say that these are not examples of the noble and suffering souls depicted in TV docudramas who would return to their families, jobs, and homes if only evil society would show them some concern. As these profiles make clear, many of the homeless have willingly chosen to be homeless and chosen to steal, take drugs, and abandon their families for a life free of ties and responsibilities. Dan McMurry, the Middle Tennessee State University sociologist who researched the homeless by living amongst them for 18 months, concluded that "the homeless" are actually modern-day versions of the bums, winos, and derelicts of an earlier era, and Tulsa's task force has simply reinforced this truth.

In fact, Tulsa's task force does not have a clue how to "solve" the problem of homelessness. The ridiculous title of its report speaks volumes: "Commitment to Un-Homelessness." Without knowing whether its commitment was to the reestablishment of the family, the care of the mentally ill, or even to the cleaning up of the streets, the only objective it could muster was the negative rendering of what it disliked: "un-homelessness." Not exactly a well-defined purpose on which to base public policy.

In the short run, there is only one way to deal with homelessness, but it is a method unpalatable to fashionable tastes. Inoffensive bums who mind their own business, keep out of trouble, and stay out of the way can be ignored. Their decision to drop out of society should be respected, but it should not be subsidized by the state. However, those who harass the public, create health and safety hazards, and become an aesthetic drain on the community should be put into whatever facility is most appropriate—jail, a drug treatment center, a county work farm, or a mental institution.

In the current climate of opinion, this direct approach is unlikely. When New York mayor Edward Koch attempted to clean up the streets and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

institutionalize the mentally ill for the benefit of all New Yorkers, including the homeless, the ACLU declared a civil right to live on busy thoroughfares. One of Koch's "captives," an obviously deranged woman, was even invited to lecture at Harvard, while others gave the woman a job and a new set of clothes, all apparently to show that what the homeless merely needed were a "chance" and a "break." Before *60 Minutes* could even get this "success story" on the air, the woman had traded in civility for a return to her previous calling: defecating on the streets of Manhattan. (Perhaps this was a value judgment on New York, for which she ought to qualify for an NEA grant as a performance artist.)

There is, of course, no long-term answer to homelessness. There will always be drunkards, addicts, slackers, and the insane who will end up on the streets either by choice or circumstance. What advocates for the homeless actually despise is not the homelessness itself, but what homelessness mirrors about humanity's darker side: about the incurability of human suffering and sin and the fatuousness of modernity's promise of the perfectibility of man and his social institutions. We think it tragic that a society capable of placing a man on the moon is one incapable of curing homelessness; but what is tragic is our inability to see the inanity of the comparison.

Anyone who speaks honestly about this issue will be attacked as "insensitive." Yet, the target of condemnation should rightly be the administrators and "experts" of the National Institute of Mental Health who inhumanely dumped interned patients onto the streets. Dr. Leonard Duhl, chief of planning at the National Institute of Mental Health in the 1960's, was one of the architects of this policy, calling mental illness a "socially defined condition" that "must be conceived as a social problem." Duhl and his colleagues saw hospitalization as the cause and not the cure of mental illness; it was society that was ill and not the patient, a message successfully marketed by drug guru Ken Kesey in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Of the half-million patients in public mental hospitals in the early 1960's, four out of five were released during the next decade. As clinical psychiatrist E. Fuller Torrey wrote in *Nowhere to Go: The Tragic Odyssey of the Homeless Mentally Ill*, deinstitutionalization consisted of "dumping unprepared patients into unwilling and unready communities."

The recommendations of Tulsa's task force are counterproductive but not surprising, for they are the logical result of decades of deceit and misguided social policy that have harmed the very people purported to be helped. McMurphy may have stimulated Chief Broom's escape, but the chief isn't living happily ever after; he's scrunched up in a ball and drooling on the street corner.

—*Theodore Pappas*

FREDERICK THE GREAT has been revived as a figure of national interest among the Germans. The anticipated attendance of German government leaders at a reinterment of the great Prussian king (ruling between 1740 and 1786) spread horror throughout the journalistic profession. In a particularly revealing report in the *Washington Post* of August 17, readers were reminded that the German people, despite all efforts at reeducation, continue to hold Konrad Adenauer, Martin Luther, Otto von Bismarck as well as Frederick in higher esteem than Karl Marx. Political correctness in Germany obviously involves repudiation of even non-Nazi political and religious celebrities who failed to foreshadow the progressive views of the 1990's.

As late as my graduate school education in the mid-1960's, Frederick the Great remained an authentic hero to my social democratic émigré professors. A friend of Voltaire and Moses Mendelssohn who insisted on writing and speaking in French, the animating spirit behind the Prussian *Landrecht* that aimed at minimizing legal distinctions among social classes, and a practitioner of religious tolerance, Frederick was held up by my impeccably left-leaning and usually Teutonophobic graduate professor, Hajo Holborn, as a relative progressive. Though Frederick used his army to fight in dynastic wars for territory, so did his neighbors, including Frederick's English allies in the Seven Years War. In fact, his father Frederick William I, also now reputed to be a militarist, had used his armies *less* often than Prussia's neighbors and had allowed himself to be grievously swindled out of part of his territorial inheritance by the Holy Roman Emperor.

My purpose is not to show Frederick in any kind of angelic light. It is rather to point out what was once generally assumed, except by the Austrian monarchy of the 1740's and 1750's: that Frederick's geopolitical conduct was indistinguishable from that of other 18th-century dynasts, save by the fact that he brought religious tolerance to the territories under his rule.

Why, then, the sudden furor being unleashed against him and the German government by Western journalists? The answer is the left's need for Teutonophobia: without a German threat to rail against, leftists cannot be content. Having claimed to fear the Germans for so many years, even as they vegetated in a militarily weak welfare state democracy, the Western "voice of conscience" will certainly not give up its hysterical tone now that Germany is unified. But the unceasing outcry has become less and less convincing with the passage of time. Our progressive journalists are keeping alive the fear of a German menace by linking both Nazi militarism and aberrant nationalism to the popularity of a clearly anti-nationalist Prussian and certified enlightened despot. Nevertheless, much to the regret of Western journalists in general and of *Washington Post* feature-writer Marc Fisher in particular, "warts and all," Frederick still enjoys a two-to-one advantage over Karl Marx in terms of the number of Germans who consider them "great."

But it is possible to see another tendency in these attacks on Germans who admire Frederick. Though leftist intellectuals, including East German Communists, once praised the Prussian ruler in the context of his time, the left no longer permits admiration for anyone different from itself. Frederick was clearly different from the current left, perhaps irreconcilably so. Unlike the exemplary German leftist Willie Brandt, for example, he was not a social democrat who spoke of national atonement. Nor was he someone, like Marx, who declared war on his own class, though he certainly forced all classes to contribute money and talent to the Prussian state. Frederick even

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had the misfortune to be a military genius as well as a good composer and passable writer of French prose. And since Hitler extolled his military abilities (though not his nationalism), Frederick must surely have been a proto-Nazi. The reasoning is open to question, but recurs with regularity, especially in tasteless reports about Frederick's bones being dragged from a West German castle (where his descendant placed them after World War II) and reinterred, with state honors, at Potsdam. Both the journey and reinterment have been condemned by Western journalists (as well as by Thomas Mann's usually intelligent son, respected historian Golo Mann) as an ominous evocation of Germany's militaristic past.

Perhaps the Germans could avoid a repetition of this contretemps if they could figure out the historical figures whom they believe are worthy of note. Such a list might eventually include Brandt, Marx, and Bertolt Brecht, among other interwar German Stalinists. A list of this kind would not be hard to compile, for all the historians of my acquaintance whom the Germans have paid to study and teach in their country hold proper views on this subject. In fact, I have never known an American scholar of German history who did not leave his host speaking of that "pathological nation" with that irredeemably wicked history. The Germans' record of support for their loudest detractors may bear witness to their collective masochism, but it could also help identify those who are able to provide acceptable role models for a nation seeking to "overcome the past." In the meantime, there will be more finger-wagging about Old Fritz—and about others who have gone from being good to bad Germans.

—*Paul Gottfried*

Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

Back in the days when Southern merchants had to take the Ku Klux Klan seriously, the knights of the Invisible Empire liked to play a neat little trick on a store owner who had strayed too far from the path of racial rectitude the secret society demanded of him. Several Klansmen in plain clothes would drop by the store and leave calling cards among the items of merchandise on display. When the merchant or his clerks found the cards later, they would read, on one side, the polite inscription, "You have just been visited by the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan." Turning it over, they would see another, more ominous message: "How would you like another visit?"

In October 1990, fresh from winning 60 percent of the white vote in Louisiana's senatorial election and forcing the Republican candidate to withdraw, former Klansman David Duke called on the U.S. Senate. The occasion was the Senate's effort to override President Bush's veto of the so-called "Civil Rights Bill of 1990." Brooding silently in the gallery above the Senate floor, Mr. Duke didn't leave any cards, burn any crosses, or lynch any lawmakers, but the senators below nevertheless understood the message. By one vote they failed to override the veto, and the Civil Rights Bill died. They didn't want another visit.

But that was less than a month before one of those nasty little inconveniences of American government known as congressional elections, and even without Mr. Duke's presence in the gallery, it's unlikely the senators would have proceeded to pass the bill over the veto. In November, Senator Jesse Helms won reelection after deploying on television a savage advertisement attacking his black opponent's support of affirmative action, quotas, minority set-asides, and the Civil Rights Bill itself, and in California Pete Wilson won the governorship by making similar noises about white racial discontent. For all its flaws, nothing concentrates the mind of a sitting politician so wonderfully as an approaching election.

By January 1991, however, the crisis was over. There would be no election for another two whole years, and so literally the first thing the new Congress did was to reintroduce the same bill. Last spring, the House again passed it, and Mr. Bush, who never fails to mention the bill without swearing that he really wants to pass some kind of civil rights measure but just not this one, again threatens to veto it.

The House passed the bill by exactly the same margin as last year and therefore failed to cough up sufficient votes to override yet another veto. For opponents of the measure, that might seem to be good news, but in the absence of an impending election, celebration is unwarranted. No matter how concentrated their minds were in the fall of 1990, politicians characteristically suffer from short attention spans, and it may require some further mental concentration on their part for them to remember who it is they really work for.

Nor, perhaps, can we rely on Mr. Bush to cast his veto as he did before. Even as he slew the civil rights beast in its legislative cave in 1990, he was preparing to violate his most vocal pledge against raising taxes, and his blood-oaths of another veto can be taken no more seriously than his now notorious line in 1988 about "read my lips." Mr. Bush may do a mean Clint Eastwood when he's dealing with Saddam Hussein, but when it comes to domestic affairs, he's Alan Alda.

Moreover, the pressures on the President from the bowels of his own party and its allies are such that he may wobble. Earlier this year, the Business Roundtable, a gaggle of Big Business managers ever ready to do deals with the hard left, sought to make friendly with the civil rights elite to push the main features of the Democratic bill through. The bill's close regulation of hiring and promotion practices within private business firms would create burdens mainly on small, Middle American enterprises, and the commodores of high capitalism have ever been prepared to pitch their smaller brethren over the topsides. As the *Congressional Quarterly* pointed out in trying to explain why Big Business favored a civil rights bill that would place legal and political restrictions on its own employment practices, "companies such as AT&T

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and American Express could gain the good will of working with civil rights groups and the opportunity to address their interests in the bill. Public relations is important to consumer-driven businesses such as AT&T, which in 1989 was threatened with a boycott during labor talks."

Big Business, furthermore, is also getting dressed for the day when whites will be a minority in the United States, and, unlike some people, its hard-eyed managers know very well that the racial and demographic revolution is going to change some things. William Coleman, who was President Ford's transportation secretary and is now chairman of the NAACP's Legal Defense and Educational Fund, is pretty explicit about this. "A chief executive officer of a major corporation today has to realize that by the year 2000 more than half of his work force will be women and/or minorities," he says. "It's in their best interest to get the best qualified people."

The eagerness of corporate magnates to clink their glasses with the civil rights elite, even at the expense of small business, the qualifications of white male workers, and the freedom of their own firms, was matched by the defection from Mr. Bush's ranks of Missouri's Republican Senator John Danforth and a flying squad of liberated Republicans last summer. Mr. Danforth, after the House failed to muster enough votes to override a veto of the Democrats' civil rights bill this year, sponsored his own bill in opposition to both the President's and the Democrats'. If Mr. Bush doesn't buy the terms of the Danforth measure, the Missouri Republican and his band of stalwarts could help override his veto in the Senate.

And, finally, Mr. Bush's own bill is not all that different in basic concept from what the Democrats are pushing. The major objection to the Democratic measure is that it would require employers to prove that they're not discriminating in hiring practices on the basis of race and sex. It reverses five Supreme Court decisions that relieved employers of that burden. (It's amazing, after all the whining during the Warren and Burger eras that the Court's rulings were the voice of God, how quickly Congress can gut the Court's decisions if they transgress the divine revelations of the civil rights scriptures.) Though Democrats make much of the absence of the word "quota" in their legislation, Mr. Bush is no doubt correct when he argues that their bill's requirement that employers would have to prove they're not discriminating means in effect that businesses would have to establish racial and gender quotas.

But, as liberal pundit Michael Kinsley rather gleefully points out, Mr. Bush's own bill does pretty much the same thing. While the Democrats' measure demands that employers prove that hiring standards have "significant and manifest relationship to . . . job performance," Mr. Bush's bill would require them to prove that a hiring practice "serves in a significant way . . . legitimate employment goals." The opacity of such weasel-words as "manifest" and "significant" is such that whole armies of bureaucrats, lawyers, and judges can make sport with them for decades, and both liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans nowadays don't even blink at passing federal legislation that prescribes what "goals" employers must have, whether their "goals" are "legitimate" or not, and how the "legitimate goals" must be legally fulfilled.

The whole upshot is the very unpleasant truth that Republicans and mainstream conservatives are no more reliable than the hard left when it comes to resisting the perpetual revolution that "civil rights" involves. Wedded to an ideology that espouses "equality of opportunity" as the sole legitimizing principle of the "American experiment" and to the system of produce-and-consume capitalism that the egalitarian slogan is supposed to justify, Republicans care for property rights and limited government only insofar as they can be persuaded that these are effective instruments of the *summum bonum* of economic growth and mass affluence. Married to corporate and political interests that are themselves dependent on immigrants and minorities as workers, consumers, and voters, the Republican Party and mainstream conservatives are unable to resist the demographic, racial, political, and cultural revolution these interests and their underclass allies drive.

But many Middle Americans who have long since tumbled to the Democrats' prostration to special interests and elites seem to remain blind to the same phenomenon among Republicans. Last June, just before the House passed the Democrats' bill, the *Washington Post* interviewed white ethnic workers in southwest Chicago, the location of "trim 1950's style neighborhoods that are home to thousands of city workers and utility company employees." The debate about the civil rights bill there, reported the *Post*, concerns "more than a political struggle" between Democrats and Republicans. "It's about who gets hired and who gets promoted, who gets ahead enough to send his kids to college and who gets left behind."

The Democrats, city fire fighter Mike Callaghan told the *Post*, are "creating a new class of the downtrodden, and that's us. The guys they are stepping on are middle-class white Americans, and we are leaving in droves to vote for the Republican Party." Faced with the disintegration of their culture and their way of life, citizens like Mr. Callaghan now encounter the last, logical turn of the leviathan state's meat grinder in the politically engineered destruction of their jobs and careers and the material security the leviathan has always claimed to guarantee them.

But Mr. Callaghan ought to be advised that George Bush, the Business Roundtable, Senator Danforth, and the other chiefs in the Republican wigwam aren't very different from their Democratic rivals and that simply changing parties won't save Middle American scalps. Mr. Bush, of course, will make sure that Mr. Callaghan knows all about Willie Horton and the Pledge of Allegiance and will wave plenty of yellow ribbons to stir authentic Middle American patriotic juices. But after the President wins his vote, his mind will wander off to the New World Order, a thousand points of light, and other luminescent cow droppings that do nothing to protect the core of American civilization from its coming cultural and economic dispossession. If the "new class of the downtrodden" in America's suburbs and farms wants to save itself from that destruction, it will have to do more than vote Republican. One visit, it turns out, wasn't enough. How would Washington like to have another? ◁

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Western Is as Western Does

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

"People first, place second," William Faulkner wrote; while Ford Madox Ford—whose last book was *The March of Literature*, described by its author as a survey of world literature from Confucius to Conrad—believed that great writing transcended not only national and cultural boundaries but those of time itself. There is, nevertheless, describably such a thing as English or Russian or French or American literature; and, within the last category, New England and Southern and Western literature, provided we do not attempt to define these according to preconceived notions but are willing to take them as we find them, while recognizing that they are marked by generalized characteristics shared by the individual works to a greater or lesser degree. For the most part, any debate concerning what is and what is not a "Southern" or a "Western" novel is almost certain to be as trivial as it is futile and boring, but that does not mean that the Southern or Western novel does not exist.

In the present number of *Chronicles*, the subject of which is Western writing, Gregory McNamee considers the question of the American West as a literary colony of the American East. He means by this the exploitation by Eastern publishers and readers of the Westerner's portion of the raw material of experience that is the literary capital of any literary tradition, but there is another sense as well in which the East may be said to have colonized the West, and that is by the great number of writers it has exported here. "Like most literary Westerners," Edward Abbey wrote of Mary Austin, "[she] was born in the east—east of the Mississippi. . . ." He was right, of course. What J. Gordon Coogler wrote exaggeratedly of the South ("Alas, for the South! Her books have grown fewer— / She never was much given to literature") is, in its second line if not in its first one, a fair description of the West, where for reasons that are wholly understandable people have historically had little time to spare for the bozart. Abbey himself was a native of Home, Pennsylvania; and from Owen Wister to Thomas McGuane—but excluding Wallace Stegner and A.B. Guthrie, Jr., Harvey Fergusson and Eugene Manlove Rhodes—your typical Western writer is an Easterner in bison's clothing. On the other hand, Willa Cather, who grew up in Nebraska, moved to New York City where she lived in Greenwich Village for the rest of her life and became an opera fan. Are we therefore to consider the author of *O Pioneers!* an Eastern writer? You tell me: I don't know, and frankly I don't care. So far as I am concerned, what has a Western setting, derives from Western experience, and is written by somebody who has actually set foot in the West is Western literature—provided, of course, that it is literature at all.

It is Western experience, finally, that most distinguishes Western from other categories of American literature; and it is primarily that experience, rather than the literary treatment of it, that has denied it, especially in the East, the wider readership that it had lost by the time of the young Wallace Stegner and perhaps as early as the heyday of Frank Norris. Long before the earliest of the stock-in-trade "Westerns" appeared, Mark Twain's *Roughing It* and Bret Harte's stories were major publishing successes along the Northeast seaboard, which had not yet developed its prissy distaste for life as it is lived west of the Delaware River. The rise of the "Western" novel, intervening between Stephen Crane's career and Willa Cather's, has been blamed for alienating Eastern (meaning "sophisticated") sensibilities from all Western writing, but even if that were so it is insufficient explanation for the endemic uninterest of back-East folk in *every* aspect of Western culture and history, except those which (like environmental damage or race relations on the

Chilton Williamson, Jr. is senior editor for books at Chronicles.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

frontier) can be exploited for ideological purposes. About ten years ago, I read a statement by John Updike to the effect that, for the sake of his art, every serious writer should reside in the Northeast, since no other part of the United States offers him the material from which to create masterpieces. There, in a nutshell, I am afraid, Updike put it all. Today, the only Western writers to whom the Eastern literary establishment pays attention are Native Americans like Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris or those of its stars who have eccentrically moved West, such as Richard Ford or Tom McGuane. (McGuane, incidentally, although some of his best work has been done on Montanan themes and with Montanan settings, seems to receive far less attention nowadays than he did in the 1960's and early 70's, when he was living in and writing about Key West.) In this respect Ivan Doig, a native of Montana and the son of a sheepherder though he migrated to Seattle many years ago, is an important though inexplicable exception.

In 1989, A. Carl Bredahl, Jr.—another contributor to this issue—published a brilliant monograph called *New Ground: Western American Narrative and the Literary Canon*, where he argued that Western literature differs significantly from Northeastern and Southeastern American literature in its regard for "surface," meaning not just landscape and physical contact but the sheer literalness of human experience, which needs to be valued for itself and not as a metaphor for something else. In my review of the book in *Chronicles*, I agreed substantially with this reading of the literature of Western America, but did not find the essential quality Bredahl identified in it to be wholly praiseworthy. What I meant to suggest was that life, whether lived in the West or in the East or in Addis Ababa, has depths below the surface, and that it is one of the triumphs of literature not just to suggest these but to mirror them by means of receding poetic images. To be able to do this, of course, requires a considerable literary technique of a kind with which poets have for millennia been familiar, but which novelists, as practitioners of a far more recent art, did not discover until the end of the 19th century. It is a technique that Western literature has conspicuously lacked, and that it seems a shame to deprive it of on purely theoretical grounds. Astonishingly, the one Western writer I can think of besides Stephen Crane, Thomas McGuane, and Cormac McCarthy (author of *Blood Meridian*) who managed to achieve such sophistication is Laura Ingalls Wilder, whose work is thought to be for children but who wrote sentences, paragraphs, and scenes rivaling those of Ernest Hemingway in their subtle evocation of emotional depths and complexities presented with a deceptive clarity. (I have more to say in this issue on the subject of Laura Wilder, whose books I have been reading and rereading since I was five years old.)

I sense, however, that the time for the development of a higher literary sensibility in Western writing is past, Eastern publishers and Eastern audiences having shown themselves largely indifferent to *any* Western aspirations, and Western writers themselves being apparently content with the presentation of "surface." For Western men of letters, the material, not the medium, continues as ever to be the main thing. So be it, then, since the material is rich indeed and much of the writing powerful, even masterful. And it is refreshing to find a substantial body of literature upon which the influence of Virginia Woolf has had no impact whatever. Still, it is in part this final disinterest in artistic formalism that is leading the Western canon to disintegration under the distractions of Western aboriginal and ethnic literature, and the literature of the paganized Western nature essay, strongly pushed of course by environmentalism. Western-Western writing—meaning writing from the American West out of the tradition of Western civilization—may be almost at an end as Professor Bredahl's essay here suggests, at least to me.

Another suggestion that this could be the case is offered by Texas Christian University's gigantic—and gigantically useful—text, *A Literary History of the American West*, sponsored by the Western Literature Association and published in 1987. Nearly all of the essays it comprises are solid and informative, but the final third of the book (organizationally speaking) leads me to conclude that the contemporary attempt at inclusivity promises to explode the concept of Western literature as we know it and to redefine it solely according to a mere geographical definition that is meaningless. "Western American Indian Writers" . . ."American Indian Fiction" . . ."Early Mexican-American Literature" . . ."Contemporary Mexican-American Literature" . . . "Asian-American Literary Traditions" . . ."Afro-American Writers in the West" . . ."Scandinavian Immigrant Literature": all worthy and interesting subjects in themselves, I guess, but what does any of them have in common with the work of John Wesley Powell, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, Owen Wister, Willa Cather, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Zane Grey, Wallace Stegner, A.B. Guthrie, Jr., Edward Abbey, and Thomas McGuane? A cohesive literature, after all, though it will certainly have its wide-ranging influences, is always the product of one culture, not of many.

Chiefly because it is a fine story, but partly also because it demonstrates how foreign influences can be brought successfully to bear in the work of a writer secure nevertheless within his own culture, I have chosen Kent Nelson's "The Garden of Alejandra Ruiz" for inclusion in this issue. Nelson, a native of Ouray, Colorado, now resident in New Hampshire, is the author of several novels and an accomplished short fiction writer whose work first came to my attention in the *Sewanee Review*. And Stephen Bodio, like myself a refugee from the urban East, who came to rest in Magdalena, New Mexico, an easy 17-hours' drive by Western standards from my home in Kemmerer, Wyoming, is in many ways the very model of a modern Western author. For one thing, he was born in Boston. For another, he has responded to Western people, Western habits, Western landscapes, and Western values as only a born writer and a spiritual Westerner could do. Nobody has ever learned to write about the American West better, more strongly, and more poignantly than Steve Bodio has taught himself to do. His memoir of the first seven years in Magdalena—*Querencia*, published last spring by Clark City Press in Livingston, Montana—is a brief masterpiece left untouched, naturally, by the New York publishers.

Since M.E. Bradford and, much more recently, Richard Wheeler are already known to readers of *Chronicles*, I am going to let them proceed without further introduction.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jan Vandenbiesen

The Garden of Alejandra Ruiz

A Short Story

by Kent Nelson

It was April and beginning to warm up in the mountains. Snow melted from the deep basins, especially from the exposures facing south and, in shrinking, formed pictures on the slopes—a snow hawk, a pack of running coyotes, an antelope. Alejandra Ruiz knew these animals would disappear as the sun slid into its higher arc, so she told the neighbor children, who belonged to the woman Ernesto Saenz lived with. "That's an antelope," she said to them. "Can you see it?" She pointed to the mountain peaks and the children nodded. "That's a hawk," she said, "and a bear standing on two legs."

The children smiled. "We see them," they said.

But Alejandra Ruiz knew the mountains were too far away for them to make out what she meant to show them. It was too bad, she thought, because in a few days the antelope and the hawk would be gone, and the bear standing on two legs would be water in the rivulets and streams and in the river which was already brown and filling with the melt.

One afternoon on a day of fast clouds, with water tumbling into the gullies, Aleja Ruiz set out from her adobe house to prepare her garden. The best earth was above the river on a narrow plateau. Her mother had planted there, too, and with the same implements Aleja used. She had a hoe and a rake (whose handles had each been replaced by Ernesto Saenz, who had whittled the ends of two crooked junipers to fit rightly into the metal collars) and a small trowel Aleja had bought at the K Mart in Española.

Aleja was not so old as she appeared. Each year she gathered wood for her fires, baked bread, raised chickens (from which she made egg money), hitchhiked into town for her groceries on the days when Ernesto, though he promised her a ride, could not get his truck started. She worked in her garden during the long dry season of summer. She had fine features, a skin tough from the weather, and sharp eyes. But she was prone to ailments. Her hip ached now and then, and sometimes her shoulder. She healed them by working.

From the plateau by the river the dry land rose to the east in uneven hills of piñon and juniper laced with ridges of red sandstone and troughs of arroyos and eroded ravines. Higher up were the foothills and then the mountains where the hawk and the running coyotes and the antelope disappeared day by day. These mountains were called the Sangre de Cristos for the color they bore in the evenings when sunlight flowed down red against the line of ascending shadow.

To the west was the river which, even though brown with the melt, glittered with sunpebbles as it curved away downstream. Beyond the river was a paler terrain of plains and mesas—lower, dryer, hotter.

The crops for which Aleja was readying the soil were corn and squash and beans and potatoes, the usual ones for which she had culled the seeds the previous year and the same ones her mother had planted. Aleja bent over the hoe. Her

This story is included in Kent Nelson's The Middle of Nowhere, *published this fall by Gibbs Smith in Layton, Utah.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hip bothered her, but if she held the hoe at a precise angle and leaned on it with just the right pressure, the pain dissipated. She was a slight woman, but work had given her stamina, and there was no hurry. There would be another frost before planting.

That afternoon, when they got home from school, the neighbor children came down the hill to watch Aleja Ruiz in her garden. Aleja spoke to them of the magpies and the scrub jays, of the eagles that circled in the sky above them, of the clouds that drove across the plains.

"Mama says it's going to rain," said Pattiann, the oldest child, though Aleja Ruiz never thought of them with the names their mother had given them.

"It's too cool to rain," said Aleja Ruiz.

"Maybe it will snow," said Ray, the little boy, the youngest.

"It's too warm to snow," said Aleja Ruiz. "The clouds are moving too fast. These are clouds between the seasons."

"What are you going to plant?" asked the middle girl, Elaine.

"I will plant what I always plant," Aleja Ruiz said, "which is corn and beans in the rows where the troughs will catch the rain. The beans will be on the outside where they will get the sun. And squash in the mounds at the ends of the rows. The potatoes will be over closest to the river because potatoes need the most water, and I won't have to carry the pails so far."

"What if the garden doesn't grow?" Ray asked.

"It will grow," Aleja Ruiz said.

"What if it never rains?" asked Elaine.

"It will rain a little, but not enough. When it doesn't rain, I will carry water from the river."

"What if the river goes dry?"

"The river won't go dry. It never has."

"But it might," Elaine said. "There is a chance, even if it's never happened before."

Aleja Ruiz admitted there was a possibility. "My mother never saw it dry," she said. "And neither have I."

The children stayed a few minutes longer, but they tired of watching the hoeing and went down the embankment to throw stones into the rising water.

On the second afternoon when Aleja Ruiz resumed her work in the garden, she had a pain in her arm. She stooped over the hoe, leaned on the juniper handle, scraped backwards, and loosened the dry earth. The day was partly cloudy and warm, and her shadow was fleeting along with the shadows of the clouds on the ground. She had finished three rows, each straight and tinged with the dark, moister earth beneath the surface. The rows were the length her mother had made them, and the same as last year.

When Aleja turned and began the fourth row, her shadow followed her on the same side, naturally, but it was altered because she backed up in a different direction. Her elbows in the shadow were more pronounced, her head slightly flatter in the kerchief she wore. Still, she looked as though she were doing over what she had already done.

Gradually her arms and shoulders stretched with the motion of the hoeing, and the pain left her arm. But she grew restless. Every few strokes she straightened up and gazed around at the mountains and the moving clouds and the sun which, interspersed with the clouds, had already begun to coax the leaves from the willows along the river. She wondered whether this was a year when there would be no late frost.

Halfway down the row Aleja Ruiz struck a stone. The tick of the metal hoe blade on rock ran a shiver through her arms, up her shoulders, and across her back. She poked the stone, prodded it, clanked the metal on it again. The earth had been hoed and raked and planted so many times it was unusual to find a stone, though now and then, to her surprise, one worked its way to the surface.

She tucked a corner of the hoe against the sharp edge of the stone and pulled, but the blade slipped off. She gripped the juniper handle more tightly and positioned her body for better purchase. But again the metal gave way and the stone stayed in the ground.

Aleja scraped the earth away. The stone was not far beneath the surface, only a few inches, and she uncovered its rough outline. Of course she had dug many stones before. Years ago when she was too young for words, a rain had come in the spring when the river was full of snow hawks and antelope. The water had rushed from its banks and over the corrals her parents had kept, had sent sprawling the huge cottonwoods upriver. It had even risen above the plateau where her mother had planted the garden. She remembered they had been very poor that year, without corn and squash and beans—only stones to dig from the silt and carry away.

That had been long ago, and it was only a dim memory. The stones had all been returned to the river. Except here was a stone. Aleja got down on her knees and scratched it with her trowel. It wasn't sandstone or shale. Those would have crumbled with the abrasion. This one felt hard like granite. When she stabbed the stone, sparks flew from the blade of the trowel.

She uncovered more of it, found a good hold with her callused hands, pulled and pushed to loosen the stone. She couldn't move it. She dug a wider arc, deeper into the ground, and the stone expanded around the blade as if the trowel were making the stone larger.

Finally she stood up and went to find Ernesto Saenz.

She knew by the smoke coming from the tin pipe that he was in his shed where, for his living, he fixed small motors—pumps, lawn mowers, weed trimmers, chain saws, anything that ran on gasoline, even outboard engines. He was a thick-set man, beer heavy and bean fat and glad for Maria Yglesias who had consented to live with him.

Aleja Ruiz climbed the hill toward the blowing smoke. Ernesto Saenz was not always willing to help her. Sometimes he did and sometimes he didn't. Once he refused to fix her roof when the wind had bent a tin corner and the sun shone into her kitchen, but when her well froze and the pipes burst, he carried water for her every day from his shed and fixed the pipes when they thawed. So now she approached his shed unknowing.

She stepped into the doorway and peered into the darkness. It seemed like darkness compared to the sunlit air. Ernesto was hunched over an Evinrude outboard he had mounted on the back of a chair. Around him were five or six other motors, broken down and waiting, and along the walls more he had not got to. "You're in my light, Alejandra

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ruiz," he said without looking at her.

Aleja came inside, away from the door, into the cooler air. The room brightened. Juniper smoke from the leaky woodstove hovered under the roof. She smelled grease.

"What can I do for you?" Ernesto asked.

"There is a stone in my garden," Aleja said.

"There are stones in my garden, too," Ernesto said, peering into the engine, "And in my mother's garden in Chimayo."

"This stone is too heavy for me."

Ernesto went on tinkering, first with a screwdriver, then with a small wrench. "You're as strong as I am," he said. "Maybe stronger."

"You have tools," Aleja said.

Ernesto looked at her for the first time. "Take whatever you need."

She nodded and searched among the motors for what she wanted. She took a shovel with a factory-made handle and a long crowbar.

In the garden she dug around the stone, down deeper than the topsoil, where the earth turned to gravel and then to heavier clay. Several times she stopped and tried to pry the stone loose with the crowbar, but it would not come free.

It was nearly dark, when she took the shovel and the crowbar up the hill to Ernesto Saenz's house. She paused now and then on the path to catch her breath and to look around her. Across the river the sunlight spread itself in lavender along the dark line of the mesas. But toward the mountains a deep blue sky settled and turned colder. A slight breeze drifted over the hills of Chimayo and through the junipers, and she knew the bear on two legs would stay at least until tomorrow.

She knocked on Ernesto's door, and Elaine answered. "It's Alejandra Ruiz," Elaine called into the house.

Aleja set the shovel and the crowbar against the door frame.

"Come in, Alejandra Ruiz," Maria called.

Aleja entered the house and pushed the door to. The smell of beans and woodsmoke and chicken seized her. It was hot in the room. Maria and the children were eating chicken at the table from rectangular tinfoil plates, while Ernesto sat in the living room watching television with a bowl of beans in his lap.

"Would you like something to eat?" Maria asked. "I've cooked beans and venison stew for Ernesto because he won't eat Lean Cuisine."

"No, thank you," Aleja said from the doorway.

Ernesto was watching an Anglo program in Spanish, and he spooned stew and beans into his mouth and chewed. After a minute he looked at Aleja. "Were you successful?" he asked.

Aleja shook her head.

"It must be a big stone," Ernesto said.

"It is a big stone," Aleja said. For no reason she felt her jaw set tightly, the skin stretched tight across the bones around her eyes.

"What happened?" Maria asked.

"What is what?" Ernesto said. An advertisement came on TV, and he watched it more intently than the Anglo program. It showed a person's stomach acid being soothed by bubbles.

"What have you not done to help?" Maria asked.

"Her garden has a stone in it," Ernesto said. "My garden has stones. The gardens in Chimayo have stones. Alejandra Ruiz is the only one whose garden doesn't have stones." He turned to Alejandra again: "Where was this stone last year or the year before, when you were growing the best corn in the valley and the best squash?"

"It wasn't there," Aleja said.

Ernesto set his empty bowl on the floor, stood up, and got a bottle of beer from the propane refrigerator. "I see," he said. "Not there. It rose overnight in the ground."

"It appeared," Aleja said.

"Help Alejandra Ruiz with the stone," Maria said.

"It's dark," Ernesto said.

"I mean tomorrow."

Ernesto snapped the top from the beer bottle with his fingernail and looked at the children whose tinfoil plates were half full. "All right," he said. "Tomorrow I will help."

On the usual morning in April, before the sun had gained momentum in the sky, Aleja Ruiz was slow to move about. Inside her house was cold. She would get up and start a fire, make her coffee in the automatic drip machine her sister had sent her from Albuquerque, watch from the window as the neighbor children set out along the dirt road toward the bus stop carrying their books and at the same time trying to get their hands warm in their pockets. But that morning she hadn't slept so soundly as she usually did. She had tossed in her narrow bed and had dreamed of voices soaring over her head like birds, calling to her as they glided away toward the mountain, disappearing one after another into the distance.

When she woke, Aleja felt her cold room was an unfamiliar place. She saw the stove, the automatic drip coffeemaker, and the same configuration of windows. But she got up immediately and went outside. Something was different.

Frost had patterned the ruts in her yard, glistened pink in crystals on the window panes. The dry stalks of weeds were layered in rime, as were the early buds on the apricot trees. Ernesto Saenz was coming down the path from his shed, pushing a wheelbarrow with tools in it. Aleja Ruiz met him at the edge of her yard where the path led down to the garden.

"I have to pick up parts in Española," Ernesto said. "And I promised a man his lawn mower by noon. I thought I would do this job early."

"Thank you, Ernesto Saenz. We've had a frost."

"It's cold," he said. "You can thank me when I get the stone rolled down the bank into the river."

"I will thank you then, too."

She followed him down the path. The early sun cast orange like an echo against the sandstone ridges, but it was still cold. Ernesto's tools—the shovel with the factory-made handle, two crowbars, a sledgehammer, and a wedge—rattled in the wheelbarrow as Ernesto steered it down the uneven terrain. They didn't speak. Aleja Ruiz held her bare hands under her armpits.

The frost was heavier in the garden. It lined the west-facing rows that Aleja had already hoed, and etched the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rock in white. A pile of earth—topsoil, gravel, clay, pebbles—lay in the middle of the garden stubble.

Ernesto wheeled the tools to the spot and considered the job. After a time he said, "I advise you, Alejandra Ruiz, to cover this stone and plant around it."

"You don't think you can get it out?"

"I can get it out," he said. "But there will be a hole."

"I can fill the hole."

"Even so, planting around it would be easier. You'll have to bring in new soil."

"Nothing will grow over a stone," Aleja Ruiz said.

Ernesto looked at the sun which was edging up from the mountains into the sky. He followed with his gaze a flock of crows flying from their roost, wherever it was, toward the dump at Chimayo. Then he measured Aleja Ruiz. "You're a stubborn woman, Alejandra Ruiz."

"No more stubborn than the crows which fly to the dump," she said. "No more stubborn than the bear standing on two legs on the mountain."

Ernesto tried the lever first. He brought a smooth, medium-sized stone from the river bank and set it at the edge of the trench. Then he lodged the crowbar as far under the big stone as he could—there was no part that was exactly *under*, but he settled the bar into a cleft. Then he inched backward into a crouch and pushed the lever down with all his weight. He grunted and pried. The stone stayed where it was.

He dug with the shovel. Sweat rose on his forehead, steamed into the cold air. He muttered. He swore. He thudded the earth with the blade of the shovel, lifted the heavy clay, showered the clods over the garden. When he got out of the trench to try the lever again, Aleja Ruiz climbed into the hole and went on digging. She lifted the shovelfuls of earth more carefully. The work warmed her. The stone moved outward from the shovel.

Ernesto pried with the crowbar. "Push from the side," he said. "We'll move it."

She put the shovel down and pushed. The stone did not move.

"If we can loosen it a little," Ernesto said, "then we'll have it."

They worked another half hour until Ernesto said he had to go to Española. "I have a business," he said. "I can't spend my whole day over a stone in the ground."

"Thank you for what you've done, Ernesto Saenz."

"Don't thank me," he said. Ernesto wiped his forehead on his shirt-sleeve and spat on the ground. "I did nothing."

Later that afternoon Aleja Ruiz stood in front of her house making bread to take up to Ernesto Saenz and Maria Yglesias to thank them for their efforts. She had sifted the flour, mixed in cinnamon for the children, kneaded the dough on a smooth flat stone under the still-bare branches of the apricot trees. She rolled the dough out, kneaded it again the way her mother had taught her. She made bread three times every week, had made thousands of loaves without questioning the task. She liked the smells and the differing lights of the weathers and the seasons, especially the afternoon light in spring and fall on the plateau and beyond, where the shadows danced across the river gorge.

But that afternoon she took no pleasure in the sunlight or in the sweet warm breeze which slid down the arroyo into her yard. The making of bread was a chore and a sorrow. The shadows did not dance. All she could think of was the stone in her garden.

She had just set the loaves in a wedge of shade by the house to let them rise when she heard a motor churning the air, a motor not of a car which she would have recognized. This motor came too slowly around the barren hill beyond Ernesto Saenz's shed. With her hand she shaded her eyes from the sunglare. A tractor sputtered into view and came down the dirt land toward the shed. Aleja recognized the driver as Raul Gádin, who was called El Pavo because with such a long neck he looked like a turkey.

The taut chain dug into the earth. Raul Gádin backed up, put the tractor into gear again, and tried to jerk the stone loose. The tractor surged in the air; the stone didn't move.

Raul stopped at the shed, and Ernesto came out. The motor of the tractor softened. For a few minutes Raul and Ernesto spoke, and Ernesto pointed toward Aleja's house. Then Ernesto climbed up onto the fender of the tractor and the two men started down the hill toward where Aleja was watching.

Raul Gádin was a tall wiry man, and he squinted all the time. He had a cherry orchard on the outskirts of Chimayo, and before the cherries came in, he hired himself out to cut alfalfa on the irrigated fields of the valley. He did other odd jobs, too, like cutting firewood or pulling stumps or, in winter, plowing driveways for the Anglos or rescuing cars from ditches. He made excuses before he started anything, but wherever there was a job for a tractor, the man to call was El Pavo.

Raul Gádin stopped the tractor at the edge of Aleja's yard. "He's doing this for nothing," Ernesto Saenz said. "I fixed his irrigation pump at the orchard, and Pavo owes me a favor."

"But why are you using the favor for me?" Aleja asked.

"Nothing is done yet," Ernesto said. "Do you want a ride?"

He helped Aleja up onto the fender, and Raul Gádin put the tractor into gear and drove down to the garden.

El Pavo stood near the stone and surveyed the terrain for the best position for the tractor. He squinted as if he were thinking very hard. "The problem is leverage," he said. "With a stump I could put the chain around and pull straight, but with this stone. . . . You see how it is." He squinted again. "Or with a car there's a bumper to attach to."

The trench Ernesto and Aleja had dug was three feet deep and, from one side to the other, perhaps six feet across. The stone was dome-shaped, rough, pocked with dirt and gravel.

"It can't be that difficult," Ernesto said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I may not have enough chain," said Raul Gádin.

"This is a stone that wasn't here before," Ernesto said. "If we loosen it a little, we can dig it out."

Ernesto set about fixing the chain around the stone, while Raul steered the tractor into the position he decided was best. Ernesto looped the chain twice around the girth of the stone and attached the remainder double so the tractor could pull on two lengths of chain instead of one. Raul got down on his hands and knees and secured the chain to the ball hitch on the back of the tractor. Then he climbed up into the seat. He revved the engine and shifted into first. The chain creaked and tightened around the stone, bent over the lip of the trench. Nothing happened. The taut chain dug into the earth. Raul Gádin backed up, put the tractor into gear again, and tried to jerk the stone loose. The tractor surged in the air; the stone didn't move.

Raul turned off the engine and the motor wound down. "Block and tackle," he said, squinting at Aleja Ruiz. "That's what we'll need for this job."

Aleja Ruiz didn't know what this was.

"I have it in my truck," Raul Gádin said, turning to Ernesto. "You'll have to drive me over."

Ernesto looked at his watch. "I got a chain saw to deliver," he said. "I thought you could do this in half an hour."

Raul Gádin shrugged. "We'll deliver the chain saw on the way."

"All right," Ernesto said. "Alejandra Ruiz, you stay here and make certain the stone doesn't go anywhere."

The two men climbed the hill on foot, leaving Alejandra Ruiz and the tractor and the stone in the garden. It seemed to Aleja the stone had grown larger since the morning, but she knew this was her imagination. The stone wasn't higher than the hills of gravel and topsoil around the trench, but it almost looked as if it were higher than the surrounding garden. It was an optical illusion, she knew, or the way the sun slanted in on the stone through the late afternoon clouds that were gathering over the plains.

She waited an hour, watching the snow figures in the mountains running and running and the sun begin to pink on the high peaks.

The men came back in two trucks. Raul Gádin had brought his own truck with all kinds of contraptions in the back of it Aleja Ruiz had never seen before. El Pavo, who always said he couldn't do a job, guaranteed the block and tackle would work, and he and Ernesto spent another long interval arranging the cables and the odd wooden apparatus. They hooked cables onto chains, wound the chains around the stone, fixed the chains to the tractor. When the time came to test what they'd done, Raul Gádin made the sign of the cross over himself. He started the engine of the tractor and let out the clutch slowly. The apparatus groaned and stretched and the engine of the tractor roared. Raul Gádin squinted back at the stone which stayed in the ground.

During the night it rained. Alejandra Ruiz was jolted from her bed by lightning and thunder and the ratatat of rain on the tin roof of her house. Drips of water came through the seams of the tin sheets and splashed on the floor, but Aleja was too weary to get up. She sat in her bed and listened to the storm move across. Every so often lightning illuminated the grayish hills, the piñons and junipers, the rain itself which fell hard across the dry earth. Then an instant later the land disappeared again and the night resumed as before.

The following morning, after the storm had passed and she had spent a fitful night's sleep without dreams, Alejandra Ruiz woke to the shouts of people and the noise of cars. Usually she woke at first light, but that morning the sun was already over the mountains and was shining strongly into her doorway. Cars and trucks were parked up at Ernesto Saenz's shed and more were coming around the barren hill, sliding and splashing on the muddy road. Voices lifted from the shed and from the other side of Aleja's house where the path led down to the garden.

Aleja put on boots and a housecoat and went outside. The air was crisp and washed clean as it always was after a storm. Rain had fallen in the yard and over the river, but in the mountains it had snowed. The hawk and the running coyotes and the antelope were covered over.

Aleja joined the others on the path. Men had brought shovels and women had come with their children to work themselves and to watch the men. They all greeted Alejandra Ruiz cheerfully. "It's a fine morning," they said. "Hello, Alejandra Ruiz. We are glad to help you."

Fifteen or twenty people were already in the garden gathered around the stone. Some of them Aleja recognized and some she didn't—Ernesto was there and Maria Yglesias's three children, and Raul Gádin, and a man called Vago, a strong man who wandered around the streets of Chimayo. Ernesto's brother was there, and Pedro Maestas, the butcher, and a man with a big mustache whom Aleja had seen before somewhere. Five or six of the men were in the trench digging. Raul Gádin, in an orange highway department vest, squinted from the seat of his tractor as he talked to Vago. Ernesto stood off to one side consulting with a thin man in white slacks and a yellow straw hat.

When Ernesto saw Aleja, he waved her over. "It's a beautiful morning after the storm, Alejandra Ruiz," he said.

"My roof leaked," Aleja said, "and now it's noisy."

"This is Señor Montoya, an engineer from Los Alamos," Ernesto said, holding the thin man's arm as though the man might escape. "He has owed me a favor since two summers ago when I fixed his outboard motor out on the reservoir at Abiquiu." "Many people owe you favors, Ernesto Saenz," Aleja said. "You will have none left for yourself."

The man took off his yellow hat and bowed to her. "I drove from Los Alamos this morning to be of service," he said.

Aleja avoided his glance and looked past him at the stone. The men had already uncovered more of it, three times as much as had been visible the evening before when Raul Gádin had tried to pull it loose with his tractor and the block and tackle. It was immense now. The stone was at least six feet across (the trench must have been ten) and five feet deep. Twenty men or fifty could never move such a stone. Ten tractors could not move it. And it had grown taller. She was sure of it. Maybe only an inch or two, but it was higher relative to the level of the garden than it had been the afternoon before. It was a stone getting bigger, she thought. Maybe only a corner of it was visible, a tiny part. Maybe it was big as a mountain, and if the stone were taken from her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

garden there would not be enough earth in Chimayo to fill the hole.

But she said nothing. Instead what struck her was how beautiful the stone was, cleaned by the rain of the bits of dirt and gravel. Its shape was graceful, elegant. In the morning sunlight it shone whitish pink, and the mica in it glittered silver.

"Señor Montoya thinks it is necessary to use explosives," Ernesto Saenz was saying. "We will dig around the rock and prepare the terrain the way they do when they build a highway through the mountains. Señor Montoya has telephoned for the required permissions."

"Yes, Señora Ruiz," Señor Montoya said. "We will bore into the stone from the sides and sheath the explosives so that when they are detonated in the holes, the rock will fragment."

Aleja watched the children running around the trench laughing and shouting at one another. The men worked several minutes in the trench, then gave way to others. The women who had come had gathered on the hillside above the garden where they were talking and passing around coffee from thermoses.

"It will not take long now," Ernesto said, smiling at Aleja.

"No, Señora," Señor Montoya said. "As soon as there is word on the cellular telephone. . . ."

Aleja Ruiz nodded. "Stop," she said softly.

Señor Montoya stopped in mid-sentence. Ernesto stopped talking.

"Stop the men," said Aleja Ruiz.

"But we've just started," Ernesto said.

"Please."

Ernesto set his thumb and forefinger at the corners of his mouth and whistled loudly. The men paused in their work. They leaned on their shovels. Raul Gádin squinted at her, and the man Vago stopped talking. The children stopped running and shouting.

"Thank you, Ernesto Saenz."

"We have done nothing yet," Ernesto said.

Aleja Ruiz raised her hands and waved the people away. She did not say anything. She gestured in the air, and everyone understood she meant for them to leave. One by one the men picked up their shovels and climbed from the trench. They moved away from the stone. Those who had not yet reached the garden turned back up the hill. The women left the slope carrying their coffee cups and thermoses. The children crept away quietly.

Even Señor Montoya bowed and backed away, and Ernesto Saenz turned from where he was and began to walk toward the path, following the others. The sun was warm and arced higher above the brown water of the river made fast by the night's rain. On that fresh morning, as the snow melted again from the mountains, Aleja Ruiz was left alone with the stone in her garden.

The Morning You Came to the Hayfield

by Brad Omanson

The swath overturns and tumbles like surf
before the tines' whirling—side-delivered,
folded and fluffed in a windrow. The earth
is rolled in a humid warmth, it is steeped
in a summer fragrance, but I am stirred
less by aroma of hay lightly heaped
as by your appearance there at the far
edge of the hayfield, a shy visitor.

The sky is curved limpid shell of blue
eddied with breezes. This sun-cured harvest,
hoisted by fork to the high spacious loft,
will last the winter. This image of you,
your skirt in clover, your lineaments soft,
will in half an hour blur and be lost.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Big Little House in American Literature

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Jan Vandenbiesen

F. Scott Fitzgerald, Raymond Chandler wrote, "is a subject no one has a right to mess up. Nothing but the best will do for him"; and that is how I feel about Laura Ingalls Wilder, who deserves to be ranked with Fitzgerald and Hemingway, Twain and O'Connor and Dickinson as one of the geniuses of American letters, though she has been regarded for sixty years as a "children's writer," however fine a one, and for the past ten as the "inspiration" for the television show *Little House on the Prairie*. (Michael Landon is probably in Hell for his part in that trivialization of a work of high literary art, with Melissa Gilbert and company likely to follow him in due course; while, as far as children's writers go, these are a relatively recent addition to the literary scene as "authors" like Stephen King, Jackie Collins, and Robert Ludlum scribble diligently to provide brain fodder for brutish and lascivious post-adolescents.) Thirty-four years after her death at the age of 90 on Rocky Ridge Farm near the town of Mansfield, Missouri, Mrs. Wilder has still to receive the critical recognition due her, although the estate itself has accrued millions. If, on the other hand, she ever does receive it, the result will probably be a mere upgrade in her literary status from "children's writer" to "Western writer," since—to paraphrase H.L. Mencken—critics must have categories, as a dog must have fleas.

As even television audiences know, Laura Ingalls was born near the town of Pepin in west-central Wisconsin on February 7, 1867, second child and daughter of Charles Phillip and Caroline Quiner Ingalls. Her father had been born in Cuba, New York, and taken by his parents first to Illinois, then to southeastern Wisconsin, where in 1860 he married one of several daughters of a neighboring family who had come west from Connecticut. The young couple moved with the husband's family to the vicinity of Lake Pepin, a bulge in the Mississippi River, where in September 1863 he bought a farm and built a house out of logs cut from the surrounding forest. Their first child, Mary Amelia, was born January 10, 1865; Laura Elizabeth followed two years later. In 1870, the Ingalls traveled by covered wagon from Wisconsin to Montgomery County, Kansas, where Charles built a second log house near the Verdigris River and Carrie Ingalls was born August 3. The family remained in Kansas a year, before abandoning their homestead in advance of federal troops ordered by Washington to remove all the white settlers from Indian territory. From Kansas they traveled, again by wagon, to Plum Creek near Walnut Grove, Minnesota, where drought and grasshoppers ruined their attempts at farming and where the Ingalls' only son, Charles Frederick, was born November 1, 1875, only to die a few months later. The family moved again to Burr Oak, Iowa, where they lived two years before returning to Walnut Grove to spend two more years, this time in town. In 1879, Caroline, Mary, Carrie, and Grace (born 1877) became ill with scarlet fever, and Mary was left blind. In the spring of the same year, Charles' sister Docia offered him a job as timekeeper and paymaster in the construction camps of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway, so he took the family west again, into Dakota Territory, where he staked a claim near the nascent town of De Smet. Later, he built a house in town and worked as a carpenter and finally as an insurance salesman.

De Smet proved to be the settling place for Charles and Caroline, Mary, and Grace, but Laura, having married a

---

Chilton Williamson, Jr. is senior editor for books at Chronicles.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

claimholder from New York state named Almanzo James Wilder on August 25, 1885, moved with him to Minnesota, then to Florida, and lastly to Missouri, where they purchased a 40-acre farm. Although Laura produced two children within the first two years of her marriage, only the first—a daughter, Rose—survived, a son having died in spasms at the age of a few weeks. Rose Wilder Lane became a world-famous author; her mother, having established herself as a supremely competent farmer's wife and business woman, in her mid-40's began writing for the farm papers and some national magazines. A collection of over 140 of her pieces has recently been published by Thomas Nelson, Inc., of Nashville, Tennessee, as *Little House in the Ozarks*, edited by Stephen W. Hines. These articles—none of them very long and many hardly more than a paragraph or two—appear to be the work of a strong but highly conventional mind. They provide no hint whatever of the work that was to result when Laura Wilder, in her early 60's, began to write the story of her childhood and early youth in the orange school tablets she bought at a nickel apiece from a grocer in Springfield, Missouri. Fifteen years before, in a letter to Almanzo from San Francisco where she was visiting Rose, she had remarked, "I intend to try to do some writing that will count."

Appearing first in 1932, *Little House in the Big Woods* achieved instant acclaim and immediate popularity. Its timing was perfect, though almost surely not considered (at least, not consciously). Nearly everywhere, the old America had been supplanted by the new one—the product of progress and of science, of industrial capitalism, the New Nationalism and the new internationalism, Big Business, boosterism, One Hundred Percent Efficiency, mass advertising and mass production, and wave upon wave of those huddled masses from abroad yearning to breathe free—and almost everywhere also that new America lay in ruins. While Mrs. Wilder, as a former hardscrabble pioneer girl, was certainly not opposed to "progress" and "modern conveniences" ("Then there is the gasoline engine," she had written in 1911 in a column titled "The March of Progress." "Bless it!"), an implicit criticism of dependency on modern technology is perceptible throughout her books, and so is the (also implicit) suggestion that the old ways were somehow better, not just because they were simpler but because they helped develop character and moral stamina. By the time she came to write about life on the American frontier, Laura Wilder was far too wise a woman to indulge herself in nostalgia, and far too fine an artist to spoil her work with it. Nevertheless, her view of the past was clearly affected by what contemporary America had become, while her vividly immediate, tough-minded, and unsentimental portrayal of that past could not help but appeal to nostalgic sentimentalism by the historical juxtaposition of its content, as well as by the warmth and complete humanity of its presentation.

At the age of 65, Laura Ingalls Wilder was a celebrity with her first book, and there were yet six more to go (not including *Farmer Boy*, the story of her husband's boyhood and her third published book, and *The First Four Years*, an account of the dreadful ordeals suffered by her and Almanzo early in their marriage that is, however, the posthumously published first draft of what would surely have been a far longer and more complete work). But that *Little House in the Big Woods* was a book for children only, nobody seemed to question.

"Once upon a time, sixty years ago, a little girl lived in the Big Woods of Wisconsin, in a little gray house made of logs." That is the very first line of the book, and certainly it *appears* to establish what follows as a work of children's literature; though James Joyce, 16 years earlier, had published his fine Modernist art novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which begins this way: "Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down the road and this moocow that was down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo. . . ." The second sentence of *Big Woods*, which also starts a new paragraph, is this: "The great, dark trees of the Big Woods stood all around the house, and beyond them were other trees and beyond them were more trees." How could a generation of readers, supposedly sophisticated in the precepts of Modernism, one of which was that the "primitive" and the "childish" are actually modes of a deeper insight, have failed to find echoes, on this first page, of Sherwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway? Nor, 11 pages later, did the following passage—actually a highly sophisticated example of the Modernist poetry with which this book is replete—alert those early readers of Mrs. Wilder's work who determined how it would be read and accepted for the next sixty years: "Onions were made into long ropes, braided together by their tops, and then were hung in the attic beside wreaths of red peppers strung on threads. The pumpkins and the squashes were piled in orange and yellow and green heaps in the attic's corners."

Little House on the Prairie was published three years after *Little House in the Big Woods*. When *Big Woods* opens, Laura is about four-and-a-half years old; as the second begins, she appears to be around six. (This is my reckoning from the text; although in 1870, when the Ingalls moved to Kansas, Laura was three.) And here are the first *two* sentences comprising the first paragraph of the new book: "A long time ago, when all the grandfathers and grandmothers of today were little boys and girls or very small babies, or perhaps not even born, Pa and Ma and Mary and Laura and Baby Carrie left their little house in the Big Woods of Wisconsin. They drove away and left it lonely and empty in the clearing among the big trees, and they never saw that little house again." As Laura grows older, her consciousness expands to embrace concepts like time and the human generations and loss; it becomes more complex, and the change is both reflected by, and embodied in, the writing. Such writing need not be lost on children but it certainly isn't *for* them. I have been acquainted with Mrs. Wilder's books since I was five years old, and I still read her with greater pleasure and emotion and appreciation than any other author I can think of. To adapt a saying of Gertrude Stein's, "There is all there there." You will find all of life in Laura Ingalls Wilder except war, and in her tremendous description of the pow-wow on the Verdigris River in Kansas in which the Indians debated whether to scalp the white settlers, even war comes very close. Her life was the experience not just of the West but of the United States itself, and her humanity was that of a great artist and a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

great woman and a great soul. Contemporary "women writers" and their ideological touts seem hardly aware that she existed.

There is a completeness, both human and historical, in her vision, and she achieves it by establishing, at the very start of her long enterprise, its central intelligence. From the first sentence of her book, the story—insistently but unobtrusively—is Laura's story, seen through her eyes and told from her own point of view. (There are five departures from this method, all of them in *The Long Winter*, where Mrs. Wilder makes Pa and Almanzo, respectively, the governing consciousness of the narrative.) And while all of her characters change noticeably with the years (Pa becoming somewhat worn by time, hard luck, and the thwarted desire to move farther west; Mary in her priggishness growing self-aware; Carrie growing up), it is the development of Laura's personality that is to the front. On page 85 of *Big Woods*, we are allowed the first glimpse of what is both distinctive of, and essential to, that personality when Laura, studying the pictures in the family Bible, asks her mother whether Adam had good clothes to wear on Sunday and is told no, "'Poor Adam, all he had to wear was skins.'" To which the author adds, "Laura did not pity Adam. She wished she had nothing to wear but skins." With those two brief sentences, Mrs. Wilder skillfully begins to establish the polarity between the two sisters: the older blonde, "civilized," docile, patient, a homebody, and "good"; the younger brown-haired, "wild," headstrong, an out-of-doors tomboy, and "naughty." In them also is the germ that will grow into the special relationship between Laura and her father, whose daughter she truly was (restless, adventurous, full of empathy for wild creatures and for all of the natural world), and the identification of Mary as her mother's child (gentle, not wishing to be "dragged from pillar to post," for whom nature is something more to be endured and, if possible, avoided than appreciated). "'We're across the Mississippi!' [Pa] said, hugging [Laura] joyously. 'How do you like that, little half-pint of sweet cider half drunk up? Do you like going out west where Indians live?'"

Little House in the Big Woods is an idyll, a portrait of a sparely comfortable life in what was no longer quite wilderness, cut short by the westering impulse. "Wild animals would not stay in a country where there were so many people. Pa did not like to stay, either. He liked a country where the wild animals lived without being afraid." (With the contradictoriness, or doublemindedness, of the frontiersman, he had welcomed enthusiastically the threshing machine that processed his wheat crop in Wisconsin: "'Other folks can stick to the old-fashioned ways if they want to, but I'm all for progress. It's a great age we're living in.'") *Little House on the Prairie*, while not exactly an idyll (Mrs. Wilder does not tell just how closely the Ingalls came to being scalped on the Verdigris), is nevertheless in some ways the most lyric of all her books; certainly it describes what the author must in hindsight have recognized as the apex of her family's experience of the frontier. The long-grass prairies beyond the Mississippi are Laura's first sight of the true West, to which she responds with an instinctive enthusiasm. "Kansas was an endless flat land covered with tall grass blowing in the wind. Day after day they traveled in Kansas, and saw nothing but the rippling grass and the enormous sky. In a perfect circle the sky curved down to the level land, and the wagon was in the circle's exact middle. . . . When the sun went down, the circle was still around them and the edge of the sky was pink. Then slowly the land became black. The wind made a lonely sound in the grass. The camp fire was small and lost in so much space. But large stars hung from the sky, glittering so near that Laura felt she could almost touch them."

Little House on the Prairie ends as it began, in a wagon box: "Once more the covered wagon was home." Like its predecessor, the book encompasses a year's time—later ones expand to cover several—but the paragraphing, sentence structure, syntax, and comprehension are advanced in complexity by a degree or two. Some of the most beautiful passages Laura Wilder ever wrote (Mr. Edwards from Tennessee dancing in the moonlight before the unfinished house to the music of Pa's fiddle, the Indian jamboree, the Indians riding away in file into the West) are to be found in *Little House on the Prairie*. Here, the American myth of human freedom in an empty and untrammeled land is almost realized, however briefly, but without sacrifice of gentility as it is symbolized by Ma's shepardess, "the little china woman [who] had come all the way and had not been broken" and who, from the mantlepiece of the newly finished log house, presides over a hearth that is the representation of a balance achieved between man and nature, wilderness and civilization..

Twice in this book, at the beginning and at the end as the family is preparing to drive away from the house ahead of the oncoming soldiers, Pa assures Ma, "We have all the time there is." In fact, time—free time, frontier time—was already running out for the Ingalls. *On the Banks of Plum Creek* describes Charles Ingalls' attempt at remaining a free man of the soil, independent, self-sufficient, dependent on nobody in the new Eden that is by no means, however, any longer a wilderness. That it is not a wilderness indeed is the principal reason for the family's settling near Walnut Grove, Caroline having insisted forcibly that it is time for the girls to begin their formal education. The new house Pa builds is only four miles from town (in Kansas the nearest settlement had been Independence, Missouri, forty miles away); and though it is a "wonderful house," made partly from boughten parts and with a new patented stove in it, its construction is treated by Mrs. Wilder far less poetically than the raising of the log cabin on the Verdigris was. Unlike the original, moreover, this Eden reveals itself in onslaughts of fire and ice, droughts, and plagues of grasshoppers that destroy the wheat crops and put the Ingalls perennially in debt. Until this point in her writing, Mrs. Wilder has emphasized the beauty of nature and the harmony in which man can live with the natural world; now, by means of the episode in which Laura falls into the freshet-swollen creek, she personalizes the family's experience in Minnesota while replacing the sentimental view of nature proper to a very young child with the tougher-minded idea appropriate to an older girl. "In that very instant, she knew the creek was not playing. It was strong and terrible. . . . It would not care." And then Laura learns another lesson. "But the creek had not got to her. It

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had not made her scream and it could not make her cry." That fall, the Ingalls experienced their first blizzard on the northern plains.

The theme of *By the Shores of Silver Lake* is change—change in its personal, social, technical, and environmental dimensions. The book opens in the aftermath of the scarlet fever epidemic, with Mary blind and Aunt Docia driving up in a buggy with her offer of a railroad job for Pa. Before Pa leaves, the bulldog Jack, who has accompanied them under the wagon, walking all the way from Wisconsin, dies and is buried beside Plum Creek. Laura, now almost thirteen years old, knows that with Pa already gone west and Mary blind, she has major responsibilities within the family. "Now she was alone; she must take care of herself. When you must do that, then you do it and you are grown up." *Silver Lake* has a different tone, a different feel, a new quality to it, and this difference is reflected by the typeface, reduced from the childishly large size in which the first three books were set. It is overtly an adult book, with adult themes and adult subjects, treated in a frankly adult way.

The Ingalls take the train to the end of the building line at Tracy, Minnesota; together with their first experience in "riding the cars," the girls have their first brush with modern high-pressure salesmanship as personified by a boy vending candy and chewing gum. At the Tracy depot, Laura muses as she watches the detached engine being rotated on the turntable. "She knew now what Pa meant when he spoke of the wonderful times they were living in. There had never been such wonders in the whole history of the world, Pa said." Her reflections are rudely interrupted by a "big young" railroad man singing a crude (but rather hilarious) parody of Ma's favorite hymn. At the hotel where Pa is to meet them with the wagon, Laura thinks that she "would rather not stop anywhere. She would rather go on and on, to the very end of the road, wherever it was."

The railroad camp chapters are absolutely splendid work, full of a spontaneous poetry applied directly and almost unthinkingly to the sharpest social and historical awareness. Laura makes friends at once with her cousin Lena, who is even more of a tomboy than she and a year older. The two girls take the buggy, hitched to a pair of black ponies, and drive to a claim shanty to bring back the laundry to camp. Lena, whooping like an Indian, gives the ponies their heads. "'They're running away!'" Laura cries, but Lena yells, "'Let 'em run!'" The freedom of the West could hardly be better rendered; and, for the first time, the fact of sex is suggested by Lena's songs ("I wouldn't marry a farmer / He's always in the dirt, / I'd rather marry a railroad man / who wears a striped shirt"). Lena confides to Laura that she doesn't want to marry ever, she wants to keep on moving west instead.

Vying with the exhilaration is a sadness produced by the growing knowledge that Pa's dream of absolute freedom and unlimited space will never be realized, though he himself appears alternatively philosophical and (perhaps willfully) obtuse regarding this fact. ("'By George, our luck's turned at last!'" he tells Ma, immediately after being hired to work for the railroad corporation.) Already by 1879 there are no buffalo left in Dakota Territory, only their grassed-over wallows, and the machine has arrived in the garden: men with teams and plows are breaking the virginal prairie sod ahead of the railroad grade, and more men with teams and earthmovers are going behind them, building it up. Laura, bursting with excitement and hoping secretly to hear the "rough language" she is always being warned against, is escorted to the construction site by Pa, who is full of admiration for the efficiency of the system: "'just like the works of a clock. . . . Watch the boss and you'll see how it's done.'" (Even as he spoke, Frederick Winslow Taylor was developing his theories of "scientific management" and "stop-watch efficiency.") Laura too is caught up in his vision: "she could almost sing the tune to which they moved."

The Ingalls spend the winter in the cabin used during the summer by the surveyors who are laying out De Smet, and in early spring Pa files on a claim a mile southeast of the town. Ma and Mary are pleased that they are going to be settled for good now, but Laura cannot help thinking that, if Pa for some reason fails to file, all of them can go on to Oregon. On the prairie she had felt alone and happy, but the new town makes her "lonely and scared." "Wild birds did not like the town full of people, and neither did Laura." "'The buffalo are gone,' Laura thought, 'and now we're homesteaders.'" Half-lost in the slough grass with Carrie, she emerges to see a hay wagon with a young man lying on top of it, looking at her. She thanks him primly for his direction and goes away thinking only of the horses. "With all her heart Laura wished for such horses. She supposed she could never have them."

It may be that in Mrs. Wilder's account of the social activities in a small frontier town in America in the late 19th century, even more than in her moving and brilliantly evocative description of the relatively unspoiled nature surrounding it, a sense of loss shows through.

The Long Winter begins with a highly skillful anticipation of the terrible winter that invaded Dakota Territory in 1880-81. Reading the signs, and warned by an ancient Indian, Pa moves the family from the claim shanty—where they would certainly have perished—to his store building in town. Here, ironically, trapped by storms in which people literally could not see their hands in front of them, they are far more isolated than they had been the previous winter in the surveyors' house. Since there is too little space between blizzards to allow the cut at Tracy to be cleared, the railroad suspends service to De Smet until spring, an event that prompts Pa to observe that, "'These times are too progressive. Everything has changed too fast. Railroads and telegraph and kerosene and coal stoves—they're good things to have but the trouble is, folks get to depend on them.'" In late winter, Almanzo Wilder and Cap Garland, gambling on a day of clear weather, drive their sleds 12 miles south of town in search of a nameless homesteader rumored to have put up a harvest of seedwheat the previous fall. They find

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the man, cajole the wheat from him at a scalper's price, load it on the sleds, and beat the next blizzard home by seconds, thus saving De Smet, if not from actual starvation, at least from severe privation. The book ends in May as the Ingalls open the Christmas barrel that has just arrived on the train, and with a lovely and moving paean to spring.

The last two volumes—*Little Town on the Prairie* and *These Happy Golden Years*—are social books, whose themes (apart from her courting by Almanzo) are Laura's accommodation to town life, which she learns to enjoy and appreciate, and her acceptance of the duty to become a schoolteacher in order to earn the money needed to send Mary to the college for the blind in Vinton, Iowa. (That her own sacrifice is related to Pa's is understood by Laura: "He must stay in a settled country for the sake of them all, just as she must teach school . . . though she did so hate to be shut into a schoolroom.") It may be that in Mrs. Wilder's account of the social activities in a small frontier town in America in the late 19th century, even more than in her moving and brilliantly evocative description of the relatively unspoiled nature surrounding it, a sense of loss shows through. In the De Smet of the 1880's, people did not sit around at home watching *Little House on the Prairie*. They held sociables, founded a literary society that gathered at the schoolhouse on Friday nights for spelling bees and other such entertainments, attended religious revivals (the Congregational minister in De Smet was a cousin of John Brown of Ossawatomie), had New England suppers, put on their own minstrel shows in blackface, kept up with Eastern fashions by trading name cards and writing in each other's autograph albums, went for cutter rides in winter and buggy ones in summer. Of course, they also paid some attention to the opposite sex.

Mrs. Wilder's treatment of her husband's pursuit is one of the loveliest and most delicate of its kind in literature. Laura was 18 when she married Almanzo Wilder, and they had been going together for three years. He had made her father's acquaintance almost immediately after the Ingalls' arrival at Silver Lake, and seems to have had his heart set on the second-eldest daughter from the beginning. Laura's first sight of Almanzo was from the edge of the slough, when she had had eyes only for his horses. In town, she had seen him on occasion (always admiring the handsome matched team), but without any apparent interest in their owner. When Almanzo and Cap risked their lives to bring the seedwheat, Laura had thought "all day" of them struggling across the snow-drifted prairie. A year later, when Almanzo asks to see her home after a revival meeting, she finds it "an odd thing for him to do, for he was a grown-up." She is conscious, though, of the cigar odor in his coat, which appeals to her as being "more dashing" than the comfortable smell of Pa's pipe and reminds her of his daring trip with Cap Garland. When she is boarding miserably at her first school, a dozen miles from De Smet and in circumstances that can only be described as representing the "other frontier," Almanzo comes for her every Friday afternoon to drive her home, and every Sunday to return her to the school superintendent's shanty. His stated reason for doing this is that his horses are better suited to make the trip than Pa's team; and Laura, nagged by her conscience, finally tells him that, if he expects her to continue to ride with him after school is out, he ought to leave her at Brewster's over the weekends.

But the virtuoso chapters are those describing the final months of Almanzo's courtship, when he drove out to the Ingalls' claim every Sunday in a new buggy hitched to a pair of green-broke horses. Laura is the only person in town, man or woman, who will ride with him behind those horses, and Almanzo allows her to take the reins herself. In these wonderful chapters, all the physical excitement of this most demure and restrained romance is expressed by the wild power of the half-tamed animals, rearing and plunging and running away across the swelling prairie blooming with masses of wild roses. When Almanzo lays his arm casually along the seat-back behind Laura's shoulders, she leans forward and rattles the whip-socket to startle the horses into a tearing run. Later, driving the single horse, "Laura's arms took the force of Barnum's pull; his strength flowed up the lines with the thrill she had felt before. Oh, Barnum! she begged silently; please don't pull so hard, I want so much to drive you." That is the evening on which Barnum finally walks. It is also the night when Almanzo says quickly to Laura, "'I was wondering if you would like an engagement ring.'"

Remarkable among Mrs. Wilder's many and considerable literary abilities is her competence in handling that notorious problem known in the writing trade as "point-of-view." Here, the technique she employs is substantially that of the great fictionists of the Modernist school: the refusal to provide the reader with information or material that the central intelligence could not itself grasp as well as, more subtly, think to take notice of or to mention. For this reason, a great deal of the background material that a reader would ordinarily expect to be provided with in a memoir or an autobiography—in particular one intended for children—is left out by Mrs. Wilder. It would not, for instance, occur to a child of four to tell the hovering bystander or listener which side of the family Grandpa and Grandma and Aunt Docia and Aunt Ruby belong to, and so we are left to infer the relationship from the text of *Little House in the Big Woods*. Similarly, in *Little House on the Prairie*, point-of-view prevents Mrs. Wilder from explaining what a "sad-iron" is or how it got its name, since the child Laura, watching her mother iron laundry in the middle of the grassy wilderness, knows herself and doesn't think to explain. And though we learn that "Ma had been very fashionable before she married Pa," we are left in ignorance of her history and of Pa's before they married and raised a family, even though these questions cry out to be answered. Mrs. Wilder isn't telling, though, because she knows exactly what she is doing, where to begin, and—always—where to stop.

Point-of-view in Mrs. Wilder's case, because she is writing nonfiction rather than novels, is intimately connected with the role of the writer's imagination, first in reconstructing her early life and then in presenting it to the reader. Since it is impossible that she could have recollected the past, after a period of sixty years and more, as clearly, completely, and evocatively as she wrote it, obviously she must have had recourse to a powerful imagination in order to compensate for the deficiencies of memory. In regard to this problem, the discrepancies between what she *did* write

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and what we know of the historical record are crucial. For example Carrie, though she is a character in *Little House in the Big Woods*, was not born until the family reached Kansas; while Laura, who was three when the Ingalls left Wisconsin, is plainly several years older than that in *Little House on the Prairie*. I do not believe that Mrs. Wilder is misremembering here; I think she is manipulating literal truth in the interest of poetic reality in a way that Ford Madox Ford would have understood and approved. Similarly, *On the Banks of Plum Creek* represents itself as the story of the Ingalls' unbroken stay near Walnut Grove, though in fact their residency there was interrupted by two years in Iowa, of which no mention is made. Finally, Mrs. Wilder tells us nothing whatever of Ma's pregnancies, of the births of Grace and Charles Frederick, or of the death in infancy of the little boy.

Concerning these last omissions, it is possible—probable even—that Mrs. Wilder's sense of what was fitting for children to read, as well as her Victorian standards of discretion, privacy, and good taste, helped to determine what was included in her books and what left out. Still, I believe that she had in mind literary criteria as well as conventions of propriety in selecting her material. Each of her books has its special tone and mood, and each appears to have been consciously shaped to bring those forward and establish them securely. The mood of *These Happy Golden Years*, for instance, is elegiac and romantic, and it is maintained nearly from start to finish. When we read in *The First Four Years* that Laura told Almanzo before their marriage, "I don't want to marry a farmer. I have always said that I never would. I do wish you would do something else," her words are shocking. Nothing is said in *These Happy Golden Years* of her reservation, nor of the couple's agreement that Almanzo would try farming for three years and then quit if he were not making a go of it. Certainly Mrs. Wilder hadn't forgot this crucial matter when she wrote the earlier book. She just didn't want to spoil the aura of unreserved love and mutual sympathy she was so effectively creating.

What gives Mrs. Wilder's writing its unique power and beauty, I think, is Laura's ability to retain the sensational perceptions of a child, while developing the intellectual and moral perceptions of an adult. The result of this combination is a poetic freshness and directness supporting a keen observation and an unsentimental understanding. In Mrs. Wilder's work, as in that of nearly every great literary artist, nothing appears to be haphazard or without intention, every idea connects with something larger, and every sentence points beyond itself. And what sentences hers are! From *Little House in the Big Woods*: "Then one day Laura saw a patch of bare ground in the yard. All day it grew bigger, and before night the whole yard was bare mud. Only the path was left, and the snowbanks along the path and the fence and beside the woodpile." How many writers describing a thaw would recall that the path of trodden snow and compacted ice would remain beyond the surrounding snow? From *By the Shores of Silver Lake*, a description of migrating geese stopping overnight on their way south: "Down they came endlessly from the sky, sliding down long slopes of air to rest on the water of Silver Lake." And from *The Long Winter*, Pa's fiddle joining itself to the music of the blizzard: "The fiddle moaned a deep, rushing undertone and wild notes flickered high above it, rising until they thinned away in nothingness, only to come wailing back, the same notes but not quite the same, as if they had been changed while out of hearing."

Whether or not Laura Ingalls Wilder's books offer the critics as much to write about as those of Faulkner's, Twain's, and O'Connor's do, remains to be seen. That they give their readers as much to read, however, is already beyond question.

On the State's New Divorce Law

by Richard Moore

A family is not a
contract;
it cannot be
dissolved.

It can only be
murdered,
and murder makes
ghosts.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Inscribing the American Frontier

by A. Carl Bredahl

Jan Vandenbiesen

In August 1990, George Bush announced that America was "drawing a line in the sand" of the Saudi Arabian desert. With those words, the President recalled a list of individuals reaching back to Christopher Columbus who have defined "America" by the act, whether physical or verbal, of inscribing the American land. Definition is, by common understanding, a verbal act: we look to Webster's, for example, to understand "landscape" or "America." And given the European cultural attitude toward ownership of land, we move smoothly from verbal to physical inscription, drawing boundary lines on the map, continually trying to "fix" or make permanent an ever-changing Western frontier.

I emphasize the inherited cultural attitude evidenced in Bush's remark because assumptions about land, frontier, and environment transplanted from the Old to the "New" World have substantially determined how Americans saw — and continue to see — themselves and their role in America. Mission, enterprise, and divine plan became the 19th-century's "manifest destiny," and the North American continent continued to function as the setting for that destiny. From this perspective, land was a tool; valuable not so much for itself but for what it facilitated.

Attitudes inherited from Europe, however, composed only a part of what rapidly became a Western story of interacting tensions. The perception of land as a commodity, whether for financial or for spiritual profit, eventually had to encounter the actuality of living on, and with, the land. In an essay entitled "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination," Leslie Silko, a woman of native American descent, calls attention to fundamental differences between the Anglo-Saxon and the Native American understanding of the word "landscape." "So long as the human consciousness remains *within* the hills, canyons, cliffs, and the plants, clouds, and the sky, the term *landscape*, as it has entered the English language, is misleading. [The dictionary description of] 'a portion of territory the eye can comprehend in a single view' does not correctly describe the relationship between the human being and his or her surroundings. This assumes the viewer is somehow *outside* or *separate from* the territory he or she surveys. Viewers are as much a part of the landscape as the boulders they stand on."

A Public Broadcasting production in 1988, "The American Adventure," began by asking why the Jamestown settlers did not simply become Englishmen recreating England. The program went on to describe a new nation emerging, but did not do much to answer its own question. From an evolutionary perspective, a new nation *did* emerge, because that is what life does; it evolves, continually expressing itself in what the 20th-century philosopher Alfred North Whitehead called "novelty." Though many settlers in both Jamestown and Massachusetts Bay tried very hard to be transplanted Englishmen, they could not simply reproduce old world values.

Few human beings, however, whether at Jamestown in 1607 or Prague in 1990, comfortably embrace novelty. Not surprisingly, therefore, one of the predominant images or clichés in American mythology is that of "circling the wagons," an act of resistance to novelty. Even before the Puritans landed in the New World, John Winthrop was verbally anticipating this action. Aboard the *Arbella*, in a speech entitled "A Model of Christian Charity," Winthrop described his vision of what the colony should be: "as a City upon a Hill" — a statement that Ronald Reagan used during his presidency. Winthrop's words suggest the effort of the Anglo-Saxon mind to separate itself from the environment and to discover underlying principles in natural and human nature. "We shall be as a City upon a Hill," with its echoes of Augustine's "City of God," emphasizes the city as a

A. Carl Bredahl is a professor of English at the University of Florida at Gainesville.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

beacon, even as an entrenched castle, and gives no indication of a concern for the relationship of the city to the hill; the actual physical environment is simply not central to the essential idea.

From the beginning, then, the American "West" has been a land inscribed. One would have to look long and hard to find evidence of an explorer or settler who moved westward looking for a genuinely "new" world. In announcing that he had sailed "from Spain to the Indies," Columbus geographically defined the "new" quite literally in terms of the "old," and those who followed continued his lead: consequently, we have names like St. Augustine, New Amsterdam, New Canaan, Boston, and New York. The "new" world had to be converted: the West became the East, and gardens were brought forth from a "wilderness"—a word which Roderick Nash has defined etymologically as "the place of wild beasts" and therefore a world of terror, the home of satanic forces needing to be transformed or exterminated.

While seeking a "New" World, the original settlers and later the immigrants arrived with most of their preserved "Old" World assumptions intact. They could assert the element of the "new" in a name like New England, but the "old" was established as their point of reference: it was still New *England*. Settlers sought the potential of free land, but distrusted "wilderness." We should not be surprised, therefore, to find that the attitude to the "Western frontier," while acknowledging wilderness as a source of possibility, nevertheless predicated an ever-shifting "line in the sand," a world beyond the confines of civilization and one needing to be tamed and converted to a civilized state. Lines had to be drawn—fences erected, swamps drained, and forests cleared—to say nothing of the clearing away of carrier pigeons, buffalo, and the native humans.

Instances of "lines in the sand" are readily apparent in American history and literature. William Byrd's 1725 survey line between North Carolina and Virginia was drawn presumably to protect civilization from the sloth and lascivious behavior of those individuals associated with the Dismal Swamp in particular and the wilderness in general. Mary Rowlandson's constant quoting of the Bible in her 1675 *Narrative* serves to maintain the sense of a divine narrative within which she could define and thus comprehend her captivity; Ahab's oceanographic charts allow him to draw the lines of the white whale's wake upon the watery expanse; and the tracks carved into the prairies by the passing of settlers' wagons figure prominently in a narrative like Cather's *My Antonia*. The rails of the transcontinental railroad cut buffalo migration patterns. Common in each instance, perhaps because it grows out of assumptions of "bastions against barbarism," is the stance of the inscriber at a remove from his environment; the fragility of the inscribed surface; and the subsequent involvement of the inscriber with the world inscribed (Ahab dragged down into the ocean by the same lines with which he has attached himself to the whale being perhaps the most vivid instance).

As settlers sought new land in the West, they continued to provide instances of their distrust of environment, their rejection of surfaces, and their inscription of landscapes with physical and verbal lines intended to defend against the encroaching wilderness; the West, then, has from the beginning been simultaneously idealized for what it might become and rejected for what it is. Consequently, from the hands of those who created the popular Western, we get either one version or the other of the narrative: *The Virginian*, *Riders of the Purple Sage*, and *Shane* present a West drawn by those who choose to see the world beyond the frontier as something akin to a land of Oz. On the other hand, encouraged to "Go West" into the land of opportunity, settlers frequently regarded the journey as one between centers of civilization across landscape at best barren, at worst savage. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that among the most frequent images in popular Western narrative is that of the fort, the embodiment of both physical and mental inscription. John Ford's movies and Louis L'Amour's novels build upon this pattern and topography. In Ford's *Stagecoach*, we watch a fragile four-wheeled box, the construct of a threatened civilization, pulled (by horses originally imported from Europe; it has no power of its own) through land held by attacking Apaches toward the appropriately named town of Lordsburg.

John Ford's eye does not embrace the land; his interest in the American West is almost entirely in terms of the threat to what he sees as the national story of mission. Defended fortresses in the form of forts and towns dominate his work, as do highly conventional social occasions—dances, for example, or meals. Even when he goes out of his way to call attention to the world outside the fort, Ford chooses to cast the "other" in such non-native American actors as Sal Mineo and Henry Brandon; we cannot even speak of these "Indians" as marginalized, for the casting evidences that "Indians" do not exist visually for Ford, any more than they do verbally. To whatever extent we recognize John Ford as a representative 20th-century artist, his movies indicate an eye for the abstract "model" and a literal inability to see the world outside the circled wagons.

And we might keep in mind that the theme of individuals drawn from a world of stable assumptions and moving into a new physical environment that challenges the stability of those assumptions makes an 'American' story synonymous with the 'Western' story.

The two themes—the edenic and the satanic—are corollary manifestations of the same mental stance, approaching the West as though it were "a City upon a Hill." No reader, then, of some of the best Western American narrative should be surprised by its themes of disillusionment and horror. Willa Cather, Mari Sandoz, and Ole Rölvaag write of immigrant experience so conditioned by illusion that despair is the inevitable outcome. Mark Twain's *Roughing It*, Larry McMurtry's *Horseman, Pass By*, and E.L. Doctorow's *Welcome to Hard Times* detail the experience of an Eastern culture entering new territory. Acts of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

violence characterize many of these stories.

Scholars like Annette Kolodny, Patricia Limerick, and Richard Slotkin have examined traditional attitudes toward the land and its people and found those attitudes characterized by what one of the most prolific Western writers, Frank Waters, in *The Earp Brothers of Tombstone*, describes as fear of the unknown. "Within the confines of this triumphant saga of conquest we are beginning to discern today the subjective and tragical history of a people who failed to comprehend the forces that drove them. . . . As the fear and tension kept mounting within them, they struck out at everything, the land and its people, with a blind compulsion to dominate and destroy." The resulting destruction made possible the reassertion of Eastern values. The frequently recurring image of the fort is an imposition against the shifting sands that threaten to obliterate the lines that have been drawn in them. In the resulting confrontation, those inside the fort can only survive by destroying or silencing what is outside it, which they perceive to be the enemy.

The result of these narrative crosscurrents—the sense of mission together with the experience of living in the land—is a body of important Western narrative. And we might keep in mind that the theme of individuals drawn from a world of stable assumptions and moving into a new physical environment that challenges the stability of those assumptions makes an "American" story synonymous with the "Western" story. In narratives by Western American writers—whether from European, Native American, or Chicano backgrounds—the reader discovers the interactions of contradictory but not mutually exclusive forces. This is not the either-or story of the popular Western.

Western narratives of horror are the result of imaginations that see themselves—and therefore define themselves as—separate from the land. From this perspective, one may read James Pike's early 19th-century journals and Vardis Fisher's novel *Mountain Man* as horrific narratives of encounter both with savage conditions and savage mentalities that feel free to impose themselves and their values on worlds they know little or nothing about. Other imaginations work through relationship rather than through separation. Writers like Mary Austin, Ivan Doig, Wallace Stegner, Wright Morris, John Nichols, Marilynne Robinson, and Harvey Fergusson reject an exclusive story generated by lines drawn to protect the values of an imported culture. These writers incorporate a story of mission with a commitment to a physical environment; the resulting narratives value inclusivity rather than exclusivity. Lines drawn in the sand become footpaths that connect human beings, rather than walls that protect an inner group.

Mary Austin, an early 20th-century writer, in her influential *The Land of Little Rain*, uses her title to work against the Anglo-Saxon word "desert" and the perceived Anglo-Saxon penchant for definition. Austin describes this penchant as the "desire for perpetuity" expressed by verbally walling in land that has been literally or metaphorically cleared. The individual who sees himself as distinct from the land can then imagine controlling, walling out, or defining what is essentially separate from himself. This imagination, according to Austin, confronts and seeks to impose itself upon the land. Naming so imposes, and naming a lake or a mountain after oneself is an effort to give permanence to human transience. In contrast, she says, "I confess to a great liking for the Indian fashion of name-giving: every man known by that phrase which best expresses him to who so names him. Thus he may be Mighty-Hunter, or Man-Afraid-of-a-Bear, according as he is called by friend or enemy, and Scar-Face to those who knew him by the eye's grasp only." This practice of naming derives from the perception of a fluid world where identities are relational and communal rather than tied to a single fixed image or verbal sound. The Indian, from Austin's perspective, values a world of common involvement. "By the time she wrote *The Land of Little Rain*," says Melody Graulich, Austin "had begun to follow the 'trails' in the desert and to understand the patterns of life in the region. Despite her feeling of being a loner and her interest in isolated wanderers, her ecological perspective extended to her study of local cultures as she attempted to understand the interrelations between humans, nature, and culture."

Austin was a Southwestern writer, and Southwestern narrative generally has been sensitive to the prominence of the neighborly relationship between Mexico and the United States. Central to this writing is the image of borders, but less as lines of demarcation than as points of transition. This imagination—in Fergusson or Rudolfo Anaya or Scott Momaday or Tony Hillerman—sees change as fundamental to ongoing processes that in turn provide strength and stability, even in a world constantly threatening to slip away. The Grand Canyon, for example, is continually being broken down by forces of erosion. Sheets of fractured rock, precariously balanced boulders, and fields of pebbles testify to the dynamics altering the face of the canyon, and these proofs of the unending forces of change take place within a framework of almost incomprehensible size and power. The very existence of the canyon—the thought of the energies that created it and the time frame within which they occurred, the marked delineations upon the rock escarpments that exhibit graphic evidence of the history of the planet—staggers the human imagination. When the Anasazi found shelter within the canyon's cliffs a thousand years ago, they must have been as much comforted by its strength as awed by its imperturbability.

Southwestern writing takes its characteristics from these interacting worlds at whose core is the reality of change. In a physical environment of such seeming stability, the idea of an individual "drawing a line in the sand" is almost too naive to merit further contemplation. Tony Hillerman, for example, one of those Western writers whose work has captured the attention of Eastern readers, builds his detective fiction around the intrusion of the academic mind seeking to profit by digging in the Southwestern sands for the inscriptions of the people who once lived there and established a connection with the earth.

Of course, all writing is an act of inscription. The difference between John Winthrop, however, and a Westerner like Austin or Ivan Doig is that the Westerner seeks lines (language) that include rather than exclude the natural environment as well as other human beings; Doig's biography *Winter Brothers* and Wallace Stegner's *Angle of Repose* seem to me particularly fine examples of the use of lines that work to include. Granted that writing inscribes, how the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

individual imagination uses those lines to reach out, rather than to push away, must be of interest to anyone looking at Western narrative. The already-noted difference between "desert" and "land of little rain" is the difference between prescriptive and descriptive lines; "desert" labels a particular spot as essentially dead, "land of little rain" allows for the possibility of life functioning within a spartan environment. In other words, even though writing draws lines, not all inscriptions grow out of cultural assumptions that seek to demark and exclude. Other assumptions can value the power of language to unite, to function as umbilical cords rather than as cuts of a knife. In these terms, the work of contemporary Chicano and Native American writers is characteristic of what many Western writers are doing.

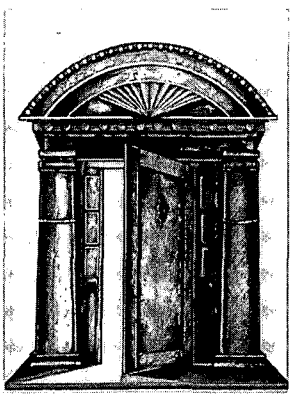
I began with illustrations of 17th-century inscription that worked to protect mission by means of exclusion. I would like to conclude by looking briefly at an instance of contemporary Western inscription that works toward inclusion. One can turn to numerous instances of Western narrative in which imposed lines function destructively—roads upon which people are killed in Edward Abbey's *The Brave Cowboy* and James Welch's *Winter in the Blood*; fences in which cattle get caught in Leslie Silko's *Ceremony*. In contrast, there is the image of braiding in Michael Dorris' *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*, where individual lives and family relationships work like strands of a woman's braided hair. One striking instance of lines working to connect is presented by the Chicano writer Sheila Ortiz Taylor in her 1982 novel *Faultline*.

The title of *Faultline* claims the attention of anyone interested in inscription. The dedication alone banishes any idea of exclusion: "For my family, in all the best senses of that word." Like Dorris' image of braided hair, the word "family" is inclusive, and its meaning is reinforced by the implications of family extending beyond blood or marriage. Structurally, the novel seeks to discover that "family" by its expanding sequence of new voices.

The narrator was born on the San Andreas Fault, a fact which initially explains the title. But lines of "fault" extend far beyond the San Andreas. The narrator's is the first voice, and she opens with a chapter entitled "A Word From the Defendant," as though words were going to be used to establish lines of defense. But in this narrative, it is the very idea of lines of fault (geologic and moral) that are open to scrutiny: "Mrs. Renninger's professional opinion ran along the lines of fault, and nobody saw things that way anymore, at least she thought they didn't, and that anyway the more she tried to figure where the fault lay the less she understood what the question was."

Whether because she is born on the San Andreas Fault or because she is a lesbian as well as a mother, the narrator is forced to confront the normative concept of "fault" throughout her life. But this book, in its sheer zest for living and its perceived joy in human relationship, delightfully tears away normative proscription. Here is the opening, immediately following the announced "Word From the Defendant":

> I realize that my three hundred rabbits are the most serious piece of material evidence against me. People will think only an unstable mind could not only produce but sustain that kind of absurdity. Yet



A Special Holiday Tradition Is Now A Terrific Holiday Value !

A Chronicles Gift Subscription has long been a popular choice as a holiday gift for family and friends. And now, our special holiday rates make giving **Chronicles** a considerable value, too. Give a one-year subscription to **Chronicles** for only $18 (you save $6 or 25% off the cover price).

Just complete and mail the adjoining coupon with your check or money order, and we'll promptly send each recipient a gift card in your name. Give **Chronicles** - - and celebrate a delightful holiday tradition by giving those on your list 12 months of reading pleasure!

TO ORDER BY PHONE CALL TOLL FREE

1-800-877-5459

GIFT FOR _____ ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

GIFT FOR _____ ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

MY NAME _____ ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

FOREIGN ORDERS ADD $6 PER SUBSCRIPTION. U.S. FUNDS ONLY. CHRONICLES SELLS FOR $2.50 A COPY. XMAS91

SEND TO: CHRONICLES • P.O. BOX 800 • MT. MORRIS, IL 61054

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

absurdity is really just an event out of context, like a beached whale. So the three hundred rabbits, you might say, are really the natural outcome of a context, one so intricate that describing it might only confirm me as a lunatic. To an inattentive mind. But I am going to ask something more of you. I am asking you to keep your eye on the rabbit without forgetting the silk top hat from which the rabbit must eventually emerge. Real magic, after all, is the relationship—whether of love or of hate, I leave to you—between the rabbit and the hat.

You are wondering how I came to have three hundred rabbits. It began, of course, with two.

Any reader's expectations for a word from the defendant that will acknowledge guilt or fault receives a sudden jolt. More is going to be asked of us. Instead of drawing lines of defense between her values and those of the jury, this speaker draws us in; we find ourselves welcomed by the pleasant, intelligent, imaginative voice. We were not prepared for the narrative shift from fault to rabbits, including us as "attentive" minds and establishing a context that focuses on relationship rather than sleight of hand (real magic, after all, is a relationship). Even the syntax provides a double negative in the second sentence, forcing one to reread to establish relationships within the sentence. Such breaking of preconceived boundaries is unsettling, but the promise in these opening words is of a voice which relishes pleasure and relationship.

No city built on an abstract hill here; the rabbit warren under Arden Benbow's property mirrors the warren of interrelating voices and attentive readers built by the narrative. "Earthquakes," a geologist explains in the novel, "are dynamic reactions against prolonged inactivity." Many people, he says, "like to think the earth is a finished product, while there's really no such thing. Earthquakes remind us." In a cultural environment trained to regard its survival as being dependent upon lines drawn in the sand, earthquakes are nevertheless inevitable; earthquakes are the result of ongoing change intruding upon a world of perceived permanence. Chicano writers, Native American, and Western American writers generally—to mention only those who are the subject of this essay—have been forced into "prolonged inactivity" by such lines of demarcation. A book like *Faultline* plays with the inevitable interaction of those conflicting perceptions.

What I find striking in the literary and cultural environment of the last twenty years is the extent to which previously excluded voices are making themselves heard. Quite obviously, that would not be happening were there not as well an audience willing to listen. I do not attribute this tendency both to speak and to listen to some kind of "political correctness," but to the fact, as I have tried to show, that American narrative from its earliest roots struggled with the effort to integrate a sense of mission and a relationship to the land. No single narrative embodies the result, but each contributes to the movement and change. The present essay has been shaped to suggest a larger narrative at work in America, one which runs between the narrative inscription of the early Puritan settlers, which excludes despite its desire to establish contact, and a novelistic one like Sheila Ortiz Taylor's, which welcomes outside voices and sees earthquakes as demonstrations of underlying energy rather than as shocks to a fixed reality.

Invariably, the "American" story is "Western." A few years ago, in a book entitled *New Ground: Western American Narrative and the Literary Canon*, I sought to differentiate between "Western" and "Eastern" narrative. I continue to be fascinated by the literature of the American West, but, contrary to the binary, sectional emphasis I gave to that work, the narrative I describe here takes its characteristics from lines of inclusivity. If a line drawn in the sand in order to establish a "City upon a Hill" were the entire story, then the dangers of political, economic, and social exclusivity would be consistently with us. But Western writers—Silko by her interest in the "relationship between the human being and his or her surroundings," Mary Austin and Louise Erdrich by their "tracks" connecting human beings, Doig by his reaching back to an individual life of common interests in the past, and Taylor by her rejection of lines that discriminate—remind us that the "city" does not simply sit upon a hill. It has a relationship to the hill, and takes many of its fundamental characteristics from the topography of the hill, such as land formation, elevation, climate, and geologic structure. "Drawing a line in the sand" has multiple meanings and implications, and at its best, Western American writing takes advantage of all that inherent potential. ©

GREAT TOPICS, GREAT ISSUES

Cultural Amnesia—September 1991—Jacob Neusner on the loss of knowledge and its consequences, George Watson on the role of the literal man, Anthony Harrigan on the importance of dreams and reveries, and Theodore Pappas on the meaning of the New World Order. Plus Frank Brownlow on Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education*, Jack D. Douglas on the sex studies of Alfred Kinsey, and Lorrin Anderson on the politics of television docudrama.

Life on a Small Planet—October 1991— Garrett Hardin on why good fences make good neighbors, Jacqueline Kasun on population control and the environment, and Richard D. Lamm on the role of culture in determining national success. Plus Chilton Williamson, Jr. on the politics of writing histories of Columbus, Thomas Molnar on capitalism and Eastern Europe, and Florence King on Jonathan Agronsky's *Marion Barry*.

BACK ISSUE ORDER FORM

Each issue $5.00 (postage & handling included)

TITLE	DATE	Qty.	Cost
Cultural Amnesia	**September 1991**	____	____
Life on a Small Planet	**October 1991**	____	____

Total Enclosed $ _____

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail with check to: Chronicles * 934 N. Main Street * Rockford, IL 61103

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Dark Fields

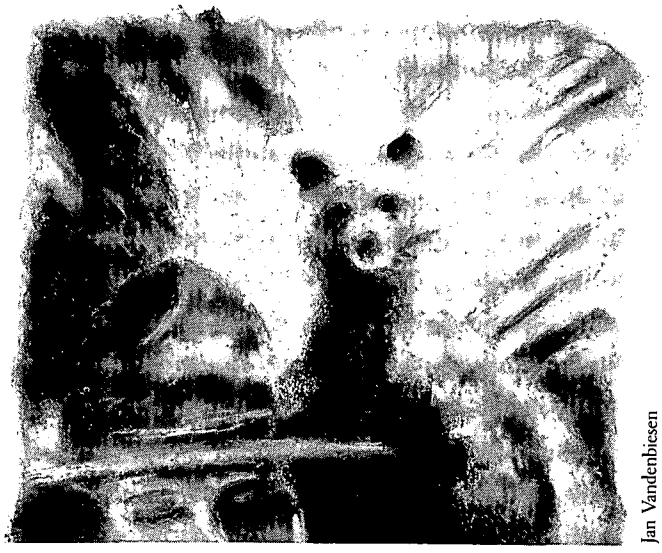
by Brad Omanson

A rap at the door: she dropped her sewing,
disconcerted, and rose to her feet,
but already her husband had crossed the room
and stood at the window, peering through blinds.
"It's all right," he assured her, "they're neighbors."
He stepped to the door and opened it wide.
Four haggard faces stared back at him.
"You'd better come with us," one of them said,
"there's been a murder." The woman's hand
rose to her open mouth. She pleaded
"Al?"—but he'd already put on his coat.
"We're sorry ma'am," said the man, embarrassed,
"calling at such an indecent hour,
but we didn't know where to turn, you see.
We thought, since your husband was in the War . . ."
Al reassured him, "Go on ahead,
I'll saddle the horse and catch up to you."
Once they were gone he turned to his wife,
"This isn't something they've seen before."
She felt a tremor of apprehension
and turned away. "Go on," she whispered,
you'd better hurry."

How long after that,
how long after hearing the clatter of hooves
sink into silence, she sat in lamplight
staring at her hands, she could never say.
That which awaited her husband disturbed
a deeper part of herself than she knew
and, unaware that what he had found
at an isolated farm up the road
was a woman shot and a man hanged,
she imagined the killer loose in the night
and herself alone in the empty house.
Dimming the lamp, she moved to the window
and stared down the vacant road, unable
to fathom a thing in the heavy dusk,
unable to see her husband standing
in a ring of silent men in a barn,
cutting a dead man down from a rafter.

Too many winter nights she had watched
at this same window, delving the darkness
beyond the reflected face in the glass,
beyond the porch and the yard, throughout
the months that her husband was overseas.
For weeks she had watched an old disfigured
oak on the hilltop, silhouetted
like a shape of anguish against the stars,
a shape nearly human, twisted in pain.
Voices from the Book of Revelation
grew audible in those nights, voices heard
as a child, hectored in ominous tones
from the depths of some evangelist's tent,
voices that conjured apocalyptic
shapes from her own interior night,
shapes in a vapor that never resolved—
and now, as she stood alone in the house,
alone but for all the spectral fears
closing around her, she grew aware
of something without a face or a form
against the sky on the hill, something stark.
Abruptly she ran to the kitchen door
and fled out across the yard to the gate,
tripping and stumbling but still running on,
away from the house, the hill, the road,
running until she began to gasp,
till the windowlights had vanished and all
around her were nothing but darkened fields.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Jan Vandenbicsen

Imagining the West

by M.E. Bradford

"The curious have observed that the progress of humane literature (like the sun) is from the East to the West . . ."

—Nathaniel Ames

Western Writers Series
Edited by Wayne Chatterton and James H. Maguire
101 titles to date
Boise: Boise State University;
$3.95 per copy

◆

As both a reality and an interpretive problem, the American West has retained its long-established hold on the attention of our scholars. And the same is true of Western American literature: evidence of the West as imaginative subject, state of mind, and setting for the handiwork of the artist, which exists already in a considerable corpus and continues in some quantity to be produced. In such circumstances, what we must be ready to seek are the grounds for this ongoing corporate fascination with lands west of Omaha, Topeka, Oklahoma City, and Ft. Worth and east of the High Sierras—the "real West" of mountain, desert, and forest lands. What, we must inquire, sets the West apart from other contexts for searching out patterns in the American past, calling forth the ingenuity and engaging the spirit of its sons and daughters as does no other region? And what does its emergence in our collective self-consciousness as both place and possibility signify for any account of our works, our goals, our purposes, and our achievements as a society? The flood of books about the West obliges us to answer such questions even more than seemed necessary before the archetypal, generic West began to recede into memory and the shadows of a distant past. For we cherish our recollections of the West as internal experience even if we have never seen it with our own eyes, imagine what it was first like when Americans came there, even if our families had no part in the great migration in that direction or in its aftermath.

At the level of immediate encounters, the West presumes the experience of a "given" nature in its most stubborn forms: of realities that existed prior to our conception of them and will survive after our adventures with the providential are at an end. The Western writer in some measure grounds his creativity in remembrance of such confrontation, or in his impressions of characters thus grounded. Place is a character in any story that he knows. In *Wolf Willow* (1962), his wonderful evocation of life as a boy on the prairie of Saskatchewan, Wallace Stegner begins his version of this perennial act of imaginative recovery by calling up the overwhelming smell of trees along the Frenchman River—trees that give to his narrative its title. Working outward from this core of weighted recollection, he remembers the boy who had known this smell, finds him hidden away in his mature consciousness where his survival guarantees that the cosmopolitan author and man of letters will always know "where I came from," however puzzled he may be about the meaning of his existence.

So many Western writers have memories of this sort that the standard history of their achievements, *A Literary History of the American West*.

M.E. Bradford is a professor of English at the University of Dallas.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

includes separate essays on extended lyric celebration of some feature of the Western natural scene, along with sections of larger chapters on how this impulse mixes readily with other elements in the imaginative creations of Western essayists, novelists, and poets. These writers make (in comparison with other parts of our nation's literature) a plethora of books on this theme, presuming still a nature that is powerful in its own right and capable of enforcing its claims on our attention because they agree with Stegner that wilderness "was the challenge against which the character of our people was formed." And for these writers, the frontier experience, even if only as a memory, still signifies. In such a context the whole person is engaged, not just the discursive reason. The challenge is not so much a matter of historic trends or social forces as it is the possibility of principled action proceeding from individual choice. The assumption is that character counts even though human beings must be recognized for the elemental creatures that they are, with no sentimentality expended on the fact that they "are in constant rebellion against the facts of existence"—like the hero, Bo Mason, in Stegner's most important novel, *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* (1943).

One may readily acquire some sense of the special relation of Western accounts of life in the wilderness with the serious fiction written in or about the region by reading a good sample of the more than one hundred titles already published for the Western Writers Series at Boise State University, an exceptional mélange of pamphlets dealing with all kinds of Western literature. Evidence of the species of direct experience unmediated by preconception to be expected as part of the background of Western American literature shows up in the work of Frank Waters, Edward Abbey, Jack Schaefer, Mari Sandoz, Walter Van Tilburg Clark, H.L. Davis, Stegner, and many others. Even from the brief discussion in the Boise State pamphlets considered as a series, it is apparent that this literature could not exist without reserving a significant place for such an ingredient. Which keeps almost all of this writing, even if opinionated and garrulous, from being doctrinaire. For imagining the West is an activity full of surprises, mysteries, and unsettled questions—like a journey into territory for which there are only a few maps, and none of them dependable.

Although in Western American literature the central negotiation with nature is private and individual, it leads back to a recognition of the need for human society, for a common life and empathy with our own kind who share with us the problematical situation with which we all contend. An instance of this close balance between personal effort and social bond is in Frederick Manfred's *Lord Grizzly* (1954).

In this carefully researched novel about the famous mountain man, Hugh Glass, the protagonist is mauled by a great bear and left for dead on the plains. Filled with anger at being deserted by his hunting companions, Hugh struggles through unrelenting pain some two hundred miles, back to Ft. Kiowa and shelter. As his ordeal begins he is consumed with hatred for those who have abandoned him. But he has a dream of another bear that follows him—a benign, almost playful presence—through the badlands toward the company of man. In the process Glass comes to see a cowardly pattern of desertion and isolation caused by his own life and forgives his "boys" for what they have done out of fear. The new man who returns from the wilderness is no longer the hunter who would dominate and roam. Hugh's strength to forgive is still an individual strength—though in part a strength to find God's shadow or representative hidden behind the particulars of an immediate event. The intensity of that experience is a precondition of the mountain man's quasi-biblical interpretation of his own adventure; and the Christian heritage in the book is suggested mostly by narratives, not abstract propositions—especially the old story of Jacob, the angel, and their contest. Only this time there are two bears instead of an angel.

But as important as direct experience absorbed without preconception is for the writer of Western literature, the West as imaginative space and possibility is an even more important notion for the interpretation of this corpus. To quote Wallace Stegner once more, this time from *The Sound of Mountain Water* (1969), wilderness is "the geography of hope." And the continued existence of wilderness as a significant feature of the American West helps to sustain our corporate recollection of westering, of how the old America found itself in that labor—and found also a set of paradigms for living. These forms for response to challenge have continued to be useful

LIBERAL ARTS

MARITAL CASUALTIES OF WAR

Although military marriages have historically been vulnerable, the number of divorces around army bases has skyrocketed since Operation Desert Storm. Near Fort Riley, Kansas, 300 divorce cases were filed between January 1 and May 15, and 140 filed in the last two weeks of May, when thousands of soldiers returned. Robert Dvorchak of the Associated Press quoted attorney Susan Jacobson as saying, "It's the untold story. In one two-week period, 1 percent of the population of Fort Riley filed for divorce." At Fort Bragg, North Carolina, home of the 83rd Airborne, divorce lawyer Renee Rothrock said her business has tripled to 300 cases in the two months after the return of the troops. Divorces in the San Antonio area, where several military installations are located, jumped from 494 in December of 1990 to 840 last April. Around Fort Hood, Texas, the Army's largest base, 220 petitions were filed in April, more than in any of the preceding 15 months. Much the same has occurred around Fort Campbell, Kentucky, home of the 101st Airborne Division, where the divorce rate has risen 60 percent over last year. "They come back to a great hero's welcome, and some of them get served [divorce papers] right at the homecoming," said Kay Terrill, a Lawton, Oklahoma, attorney whose divorce case load has increased more than 30 percent since April.

Dvorchak quoted Preston Garrison, executive director of the National Mental Health Association, as saying, "What's needed beyond the parades is recognition that there are normal and natural emotional stresses any time people are removed from normal activities and absent for a time." His organization printed a guidebook for returning veterans entitled, *After the Yellow Ribbons Come Down*, which has already gone through its run of 25,000 copies since its publication last May.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the inheritors, even though they have not heard the sound of mountain water, smelled the wolf willow tree, or wrestled with the bear.

One further observation. New Englanders, Southerners, and the commercially minded Americans of the Middle States, as I have argued before, brought a filter with them as they extended westward civilizations that they knew and loved. In blocking them off from direct transactions with the West, these overlays also inhibit their apprehension of the majesty of nature: that which is numinous and wholly other. Writers concerned with the mountain West are not often thus constrained. They understand what Wordsworth meant by "that beauty which hath terror in it," which brings to us both awe and exaltation. The West as ground for religious experience, a land resilient in resisting intruders and not easily subjected to our will, is not to be underplayed, though it fosters religion of a very Protestant kind, with each man a church of his own as he contemplates what God hath wrought.

For reasons detailed in my account of how we go about imagining the West, I do not expect to see any great falling off in the volume, intensity, or artistic value of Western writing in the foreseeable future. For even though it is evident that Hollywood and the major television networks do not so much depend on Western materials as was once the case, it is also true that that shift has more to do with the intellectual and political bias of those who generate these entertainments than with the attitude of the nation toward serious treatments of life as lived in the Western setting or under the terms prescribed for usage by the Western imagination. Moreover, the academic industry of interpreting the West as history or literature is on its way toward achieving some definitive shape. In the process, a distinctive culture is coming toward self-consciousness of a variety it had not previously known.

In examining the evidence supporting these remarks, I should acknowledge the contributions of the Western American Literature Association and of the Western and Southwestern Historical societies. Journals like *Western American Literature*, *South Dakota Review*, *Southwestern Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Southwest American Literature* watch attentively the flow of publications that deal with westering and wilderness or the enterprise of knowing what these words mean. The University of Nebraska Press has accepted as its role keeping in print the classic texts of Western American literature. In this work they have been frequently supported by the presses of the University of Texas at El Paso, Texas Christian University, Southern Methodist University, Utah State, and the University of New Mexico. The new press at the University of North Texas has also made an ambitious beginning. With the history of the American West, the University of Oklahoma Press has, over a period of almost fifty years, assumed a special responsibility. And the Western Writers Series, with titles ranging from Richard Etulain's *Owen Wister* through Dorys Crow Grover's *John Graves*, will, when completed, be a basic introduction to the writers who constitute this field. What began in spontaneity has been translated into art. What had its origin in unplanned encounter has matured with reflection into an understanding of hidden connections, which together struggle toward making up the ground for a literary tradition. This process as it emerges should be an encouragement to those who do not believe that the United States and its cultural development are a finished business. For as concerns the operation of the imagination in dealing with the American West, the evidence is altogether to the contrary.

The Watch

by Brad Omanson

Lodged in oak on a rugged bluff,
  a ruined farmhouse rises over
lands that gulley into the rough
    cleft of Spoon River—

lands that for generations fell
  from father unto eldest son
with always hope of harvest till
    foreclosed upon.

The current owner lives so far
  away he's never seen the dark
April fields lie furrowed or
    winter fields lie stark

and now Spoon River, ever more,
  runs muddy through eroded banks—
the footbridge is in disrepair,
    minus many planks.

Upon the bluff, in cryptic shade,
  the house succumbs to slow decay—
where once the porch and parlor stood,
    grazing cattle stray,

yet the old proprietor stands
  attentive at his window, still
keeping watch: his icy hands
    grip the rotted sill.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Best of Our Time

by Geoffrey Wagner

Our Age: English Intellectuals Between the World Wars—A Group Portrait
by Noel Annan
New York: Random House;
479 pp., $30.00

◆

Elected Provost of King's College, Cambridge, in his 30's and subsequently Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, Lord Annan is a delightful person who has given us a delightful book of scintillating erudition that ranges far beyond the confines of its subtitle. Indeed, there can hardly be a single English intellectual of significance in this century who is not mentioned in it.

As an etiology of upper-class England, it is inevitably grounded in that "unique British institution," the public school, which is to say the private school. Having been through one, I can attest to Cyril Connolly's opinion that the experience dominates your life. I have seen two elderly Englishmen introduced to each other and soon bringing up the ritual question, *Where were you at school?* (It is a fairly meaningless one in Italy or France and stands apart in intensity of definition from any university allegiance.) In my one brief meeting with T.S. Eliot, it was the only question he put to me.

Annan rightly sees this code of the public school man percolating through British life and letters, as well as politics (every member of Macmillan's postwar cabinet, including himself, had been to Eton). The *New York Times* reviewer objected to the elitist background of *Our Age*—only four percent of the British population experienced any form of higher education before the last war—but failed to see that the book is about Our Age rather than "our age." Annan capitalizes throughout.

The code taught civilized behavior—or manners if you will (Winchester's motto being "Manners Makyth Man"); loyalty to institutions such as school, family, regiment; avoidance of conceit ("side") as of any emotional show; religion as a form of social control; and stoicism on playing or battlefield (one master sidelined tennis as a sport since it didn't hurt enough). I won't mention the food.

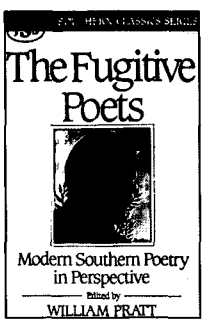
Philistinism was one of the results. When Roger Fry showed some early Matisse to art students they jeered back, "Drink or drugs?" An Oxford professor discredited Zola and Ibsen by comparing their photographs with those of "any decent midshipman." My own Oxford tutor, producing Shakespeare on the London stage, told me to avoid Ibsen as "barbaric," while his friend and colleague C.S. Lewis detested T.S. Eliot.

The code—which Kipling called The Law—has been covered in other books, but never so entertainingly. It bequeathed a remarkable self-confidence, epitomized by the story of the Duke of Wellington strolling down Bond Street in plain clothes (mufti) later in life and being accosted by a man saying, "Aren't you Mr. Jones?" To which the Iron Duke replied, "My dear chap, if you can believe that, you can believe anything." Women's schools aped the men's, as in the select Cheltenham Ladies College, where Indira Gandhi and Iris Murdoch were chums, and the code was exported to the colonies.

The rebellion against the code was intellectually rich. Churchill's nephew ran away from Wellington and Toynbee's son from Rugby. It was also perforce entirely upperclass; Annan's subjects for portraiture include Bertrand Russell ("a Whig holding advanced Victorian views"), Virginia Woolf ("the patron saint for the feminists of Our Age"), the insufferable Strachey, and Bloomsbury collectively. As for the university communists and Cambridge spies, *Our Age* parallels Verne W. Newton's recent book on the vermin, Annan well quoting Sir Harold Acton that "Every villain is followed by a sophist with a sponge"—truly a motto for our times.

A major dissent against the Establishment took the form of the cult of homosexuality. But what Sir Maurice Bowra called the Homintern is hard to interpret to modern America where the subject has become so politicized and vulgarized and in a word disgusting. In England between the wars it was of course criminal conduct (Gielgud so fined) rather than the rallying point for some new demonstration. England had, in any case, a long and innocent bachelor tradition. One American professor put a sexual interpretation on the fact that as a boy A.E. Housman had his arm slung around another in a school photo. But in those days the cameraman carefully composed such groups and my father's study was tapestried with old rugger hearties so enlaced. Nor would the few lesbians of the British 20's have been anything but stunned by the feminist terror squads of modern America. Generally, the "queer" was not politically ambitious then. Keynes did not

Classic Southern Reprints From J. S. Sanders & Company



Available in a quality paperback format this fall's Southern Classics Series titles, under the editorship of M. E. Bradford, include *The Fugitive Poets: Modern Southern Poetry in Perspective*, edited by William Pratt, $10.95; *In Ole Virginia: Or, Marse Chan and Other Stories* by Thomas Nelson Page, $8.95; *Penhally* by Caroline Gordon, $10.95; *The Tennessee, Vol. I: The Old River: Frontier to Secession* by Donald Davidson, $10.95; and *Stonewall Jackson: The Good Soldier* by Allen Tate, $10.95.

These works can be purchased by sending a check, money order, Mastercard or Visa number to: J. S. Sanders & Company, P.O. Box 50331, Dept. H, Nashville, TN 37205. Or call: (615) 790-8951. Please include $1.50 shipping fee for the first book and $.50 for each additional book. The Southern Classics Series books are also available through bookstores.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strut his sexual bias. Oscar Wilde, asked what he thought about socialism, flapped a wrist and replied, "All those evenings."

With the advent of a permissiveness largely imported from America, liberalism parodied itself in English intellectual life as in American; "The wall of silence and ignorance crumbled in the fifties and sixties." And "No Government had ever contained so many former dons and intellectuals as the Labour administrations of the sixties." Annan regales us with chapters on "deviants"—Waugh, Leavis ("A don who despised scholarship as pedantry"), Michael Oakeshott—alongside pen-portraits of C.P. Snow, A.J.P. Taylor, Wittgenstein, my own Oxford colleague Hugh Trevor-Roper (now Lord Dacre), and a host of others, all brilliantly "placed" within their time. At the end he has to ask himself whether Britain's decline into a client state of America is due to its educated classes or to the trade unions that split the Labour Party in the 70's ("They also destroyed social democracy for a decade and the political assumptions of Our Age"). Mrs. Thatcher courageously opposed the latter, but by that time the country had become fairly ungovernable. "Britain now became the victim of her own rhetoric. She fondly imagined she had won the war. She had not. America and Russia had won the war."

A similar book to Annan's has just come out by a friend of his, Desmond Flower. Throughout this century three generations of the Flower family owned and directed the celebrated firm of Cassell & Co., Churchill's publisher (and my own), until brutally bought out by the usual American conglomerate; one editor, Toby Buchan, John Buchan's son, told me he had been "spat onto the street" by the American impresarios. Desmond Flower's memoirs, *Fellows in Foolscap*, read alongside Annan's, show a similarly sunny period when a man of taste could publish what he wanted to, without the circus. Gloucester's lament in *Lear* stands in my mind as an epitaph over both books: "We have seen the best of our time."

Geoffrey Wagner is an emeritus professor of English of the City University of New York.

Ishmael Among the Scriveners

by Thomas Fleming

Teorie e Altre Liriche
by Peter Russell
Rome: Carlo Mancosu

◆

The heroic age of modern poetry has been over for some time. The learned reactionaries who shaped it for two generations have all been dead for many years: Eliot (1965) and Pound (1972), Valéry (1945) and Claudel (1955), Ungaretti (1970) and Montale (1981). Diverse in style and technique, the great modernists were all ambitious in straining at the limits of expression, in finding the principles that underlie formal conventions, in bringing to bear the weight of humane learning upon the inhuman conditions of the 20th century. The poets who have followed, even when they are good, have had neither the erudition nor the ambition to take up their challenge.

There is, however, one outstanding exception to this generalization, Peter Russell. Born in Bristol in 1920, Russell served in the British army in Europe and in the Indian army in the East. He has lived virtually everywhere—Malaya, Berlin, Venice, Tehran, and British Columbia, and at one time or another has studied much of what is worth studying. He can translate from Latin and write in Serbo-Croatian, and the range of his allusions is almost as broad (although by no means as bewildering) as that of Ezra Pound. Russell's connection with Pound goes deeper than style, since it was Peter Russell who worked for years to secure Pound's release from St. Elizabeth's. (Why is it that exile and madness are the two destinies most frequently enjoyed by American poets?)

Quite apart from a long list of volumes of verse and criticism, Peter Russell has, over the years, involved himself in a number of literary projects, as editor of the arts review *Nine* in the 1950's, and more recently of his own newsletter *Marginalia*, which is like a personal letter from a brilliant and learned friend. His work is also to be found in *Temenos*, an unusual journal of "imagination."

These days Mr. Russell is living in rural Tuscany, from which he continues to make lecturing forays, and is regarded with considerable respect in Italian literary circles. His newest volume, a selection of his recent verse accompanied by translations into Italian, might serve as an introduction to readers unfamiliar with Russell's work.

Here we find examples of his hard-edged lyricism put into forms whose rules he manages to twist and bend to his own convenience:

> Would I could find the magic
> arrow
> To shoot up in the seamless
> blue
> My house of earth is narrow,
> narrow
> How should I welcome you?
>
> It's ruined too O make it wide
> Strike down these ruins and
> rebuild
> What if the bolt transfix my side
> If my empty cup be filled.

The following lines begin his poem "By the Lake," which also illustrates Russell's metaphysical bent:

> Primordial silence on the lake

LIBERAL ARTS

AND PEE-WEE HERMAN'S VOICE MADE HER . . .

A neurologist reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* last summer that a woman's epileptic seizures were caused by the voice of *Entertainment Tonight* co-host Mary Hart. Symptoms included an upset stomach and mental confusion. The Associated Press reported Dr. Venkat Ramani as saying, "It was very dramatic. . . . The expression in her eyes—she looked like she was far away and out of it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The coots and grebes seem
painted there
The alder boughs' reflections
make
No ripple on the flood or air

Russell prefaces the poem with a line from Luke's Gospel, which he quotes in Anglo-Saxon, partly because he finds it beautiful and partly because he is contemptuous of the pseudo-literary culture of an England that has cut itself off from its past in order to embrace television and comic books.

Russell is no conservative—whatever that term means any more. Sometimes he sounds the mystical note of charity, and at other times he is the embittered reactionary. In the nightmarish "A Ballad" the wandering king describes a kingdom that could be the modern West:

In my old kingdom now they
say
The people rule, the nobles
dead;
The women whores, the men
all gay,
And the black flag changed for
red.

A race of lawyers rules the land,
There's no fresh fruit, no game;
The milk is powdered, meat's
all canned
And the sour wine's all
the same.

Peter Russell will probably bewilder readers of poetry whose sensibilities have been formed on what Conrad Aiken called the "vin Audenaire" of postwar verse. Writing sometimes with the almost Mother Goose simplicity of Blake, he can proceed rapidly to the highest "hermeticism" (a term frequently applied to the great modern Italians). In this volume, however, his verse is never perplexing and rarely as extravagant as Russell has been elsewhere.

The hawk-moth sucks the
rosemary
Whose pale blue flowers are my
heart;
The long scroll of his tongue is
me,
A glowing filament of art.

Finally, to appreciate Russell's art, consider his fine poem on old age, "Anziano":

I'm going deaf, I'm going blind,
Scales forming on my eyes;
Where delicate labyrinths
wind—
A hammer,—in a vise . . .

Almost insensitive to pain,
My finger-tips mere bone—
Stumps that must knock, to
feign
The well-tempered virginal's
tone;

The perfume of the rose or
musk,
Dusky and vague like
memories—
The body's house a dried-up
husk,
An old blanket full of fleas;

Trout broiled on a fire of wood,
Delicious odours of the past!
Succulent meat!—surely 'twas
good?—
I'm "No Man" now—could
feed on mast!

Deprived then of the boon of
senses,
Say I'm a wretched
shell,—decrepit!
young limbs that vaulted
towering fences—
Blood watered down now barely
tepid:

Yet in the brain-box there's a
fire
Burns like a blood-red June
geranium;
Let wrinkled skin get drier and
drier—
A world of wonders fills
this cranium!

There is not that much great verse on old age—Sophocles, Shakespeare, W.S. Landor, Yeats; but Russell manages to echo much of it. (The "towering fences," for example, recall Landor's "five bar gate.") The smell of trout cooking on an open fire leads into the great outdoorsman, Odysseus (No Man), who fought the primitive Cyclops, and an allusion to the Golden Age stories of men who lived on acorn mast. But while these echoes and allusions add layers of richness to the poem, no one can escape either the detailed realism of the opening lines or the defiant passion of the conclusion, with its brilliant image of a red summer flower inside an old man's skull. (Does Russell, I wonder, intend a play on "geranium"—as if derived from the Greek word for old?)

When I first began to be aware of Peter Russell, I wondered vaguely why an English poet was living, cut off from his language, in Italy. The more I read, however, the more I realized that the state of Anglo-American culture, our language as well as our literature, would make Britain and America uncongenial places for the last of great modernists.

Thomas Fleming is the editor of Chronicles.

The Singer and the Song

by J.O. Tate

Fernando de Lucia, Son of Naples: 1860-1925
by Michael E. Henstock
Portland: Amadeus Press;
555 pp., $45.00

◆

Memory and testimony have kept alive the reputation of Fernando de Lucia, and so have the four hundred recordings that tenor made between 1902 and 1921. His old discs—Gramophone and Typewriters, Fonotipias, and Phonotypes—are among the most fascinating of historical recordings. What they suggest about the man and his context has inspired Michael Henstock to go after his subject with a maximum of zeal. Though the performer's art is evanescent, Henstock has done everything humanly possible to recreate the matrices of De Lucia's career and even to impress his reconstructed sound upon the mind's ear.

Henstock's extensive researches—a labor of love if I've ever seen one—have resulted in an elaborately documented and even exhaustive account of a singer's life. The survey of critical reactions to De Lucia's performances cover three continents, three decades, and comments in Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, *et cetera*. Henstock builds his case systematically,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

showing how De Lucia formed his style upon those of three stars—Gayarre, Masini, and Stagno—and how he ascended to take their place as an internationally celebrated performer. The author is as precise as words allow in rendering subtleties of style and in leading the reader to understand De Lucia's *portamento*, his *mezza voce*, and his *sfumature*—qualities that his recordings have preserved.

But he also sees Fernando de Lucia in the round. Singing exists in a social context—it is more than the production of pleasing sounds. So Henstock draws for us a picture of Naples, its society and landscape, the people and the culture. De Lucia was Neapolitan to the core, and his career grew with the exfoliation of Neapolitan song. Songs such as *'O sole mio*, *Marechiare*, *Torna a Surriento*, *'O marenariello*, *Occhi di fata*, *Aprile*, and *Mattinata* belonged to De Lucia from the beginning, by complete identification. He sang them for his neighbors. He sang them for royalty. And he recorded them for us. De Lucia *owned* those songs—universally beloved by older generations—as Gigli and Schipa and Bergonzi were later to do.

But the focus of De Lucia's career was operatic, and Henstock emphasizes his place in musical history, for his ascendancy corresponded with that of *verismo*. De Lucia was probably the greatest Turridu, the greatest Canio, and the greatest Don José that ever trod the boards. Of course he excelled as the Duke of Mantua and as Count Amalviva—he sang the *bel canto* roles beautifully and freely—and he showed a flair for comedy and even sang Lohengrin (!), but his best work on stage was in the new operas of Mascagni, Leoncavallo, and Puccini.

De Lucia's prominence was such that he was instrumental in establishing the *verismo* operas in the repertory, and he was important in the history of Mascagni's compositions after *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Henstock's tireless exposition of the tangled relations of ambitious composers, autocratic conductors, proprietary publishers, scheming managers, and vulnerable singers is a rich portrayal of the music business in action. In addition, he shows us De Lucia's colleagues, some of whom are today still regarded as the greatest of singers, just as they were when he sang with them: Patti, Plançon, and Battistini, to name but three.

And of course Henstock shows us Fernando de Lucia, who, though he treats him as a hero, he represents fairly and unflinchingly. The course of the great singer's life was a glorious one, though it was tortured by what seems to have been a miserable marriage. De Lucia lived long enough to become a legend, to teach, and even to sing at the funeral of Caruso, the young lion whose style made his own seem quaint. De Lucia's subtlety and grace were not to be cultivated as virtues in the modern period, though perhaps Henstock's admirable book may help to turn the tide.

This book is a scholarly contribution to the history of music, of performance art, of theatrical history, and of Italian culture, as well as a deeply developed rendering of the decades before and after the turn of the century. Henstock's life of De Lucia may not be for everyone, but it will certainly attract those individuals fascinated by its subject as well as by the broader context of vocal art and the history of opera. His book will also find its place on many a library shelf as a permanent reference and source.

But this has not been Henstock's only service to the memory of Fernando de Lucia. Henstock has also been the compiler of an anthology of De Lucia's recordings of Neapolitan songs, gathered in a two-CD set, "Fernando de Lucia," Opal CDS 9845 (imported by KOCH International). Those discs contain over two hours of De Lucia's singing, transcribed digitally at lower speeds than the 78 r.p.m. they have usually been played at. Henstock's elaborate arguments for bringing down the speeds of antique acoustically recorded discs in order to pull the pitches down a half-tone are ones to be studied, their results to be considered. No one can doubt Henstock's knowledge of the material or devotion to the task, though some have questioned not so much his logic as the aural product. I have found my ear adjusting to the Opal transcriptions, not least because they give me new access to the enchanting voice of Fernando de Lucia. Somewhere that great singer must be proud of what his champion has accomplished on his behalf.

J.O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.

BRIEF MENTIONS

THE ECONOMICS OF LIBERTY
Edited by Llewellyn H. Rockwell
Auburn, Alabama: The Ludwig von Mises Institute; 392 pp., $17.00

Lew Rockwell and his colleagues at the Ludwig von Mises Institute have managed to keep alive a pure strain of libertarianism, uncontaminated by the power fantasies of the soft right or the erotic fantasies of lifestyle libertarians. With an economic theory firmly grounded in the Austrian school and a passionate attachment to the American principle of limited government, these "paleolibertarians" do more than issue press releases or little reports that no one reads. Through regular conferences and summer-school programs they have been creating a following of intelligent students, and through their series of books, pamphlets, and reprints, they are doing what they can to stall the progress of bureaucracy and mind-control that is spreading throughout every institution of American life.

The Institute's recent volume, *The Economics of Liberty*, collects articles from a variety of sources: Murray Rothbard, Jeff Tucker, and Lew Rockwell himself from the Institute; other well-known libertarian writers and scholars such as Robert Higgs, Walter Block, Doug Bandow, and Sheldon Richman; as well as a variety of free-market journalists not tied to the Austrian school—Tom Bethell, Joseph Sobran, William Murchison, and Pat Buchanan.

The subjects range from agricultural and arts policies to the S & L crisis to the Soviet crack-up. Particularly timely is the pair of comments by Pat Buchanan and Bill Kauffman on the new American nationalism. These comments and this book as a whole are fresh evidence that the dissolution of the Soviet empire (followed by the disintegration of the monolithic American right) is an opportunity to rethink the past sixty years of American political history.

—*Thomas Fleming*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Letter From the Frontier

by Stephen Bodio

Ranchwomen, Life, and Literature

◆

As far as I know, my friend Sissy has never written anything, although she probably reads more widely than most people I know with graduate degrees. She's at first and probably second glance an archetypical ranchwoman. That first glance would be the outsider's. Sis is in her mid-30's, tall, taller than I am, and strong, usually dressed in boots and wide hat and even spurs—real working Blanchards, for connoisseurs of Southwestern objects on their way to becoming collectibles rather than tools. She drawls and shakes your hand like a man and says "ain't" and "could of." A few questions might reveal that she was the first female brand inspector in the United States, and that she holds in her own name, not just her family's, the third oldest brand in the state of New Mexico. A conversation with her can turn into a series of anecdotes on the lines of "We was running 2,000 heifers. I was pregnant and I just had a leg operation. The cowboy quit. Then we found 28 dead cows one morning and we hadn't even got up in the trees. I cut one open that wasn't *too* green . . ."

But then there's that second look. Usually, Sis will have her four-year-old daughter Gianetta in tow, and sometimes her eleven-year-old son Brian, whom she "home-schooled" for his first five grades and who was ahead of his class when he returned to public school. Further conversation will disturb, amuse, or amaze those who characterize flyover country as, in Auden's words, "a desert full of bigots," or whose ideas of life in the West come from such yuppie fantasies as "City Slickers," though they might also appall the more pompous among urban conservative intellectuals. Sissy's mixture of traditionalism, libertarianism, and, yes, conservationist thinking might seem impossible to those accustomed to coastal polarities and stereotypes. She is a devout Catholic who can't always make it to Mass and who knows and tells more hilarious bawdy jokes than anyone I know; a lifetime registered Republican who cannot understand the impulse to censor; a die-hard patriot who can enjoy the company of New Mexico's remnant hippies; a fourth-generation so-called Anglo rancher whose ancestors hailed not from Texas but from Italian Switzerland; an opponent of *nouveaux* greenies who snarled, "where the [expletive deleted] do those [expletive deleted] expect us to go?" when some loon put a "welfare ranchers go home" sticker on her family's stock tank, but who also refuses to kill rattlesnakes, or for that matter any predator not doing damage on her ranch, and who can tell you where the hawks nest and the bobcats den; a stockwoman who can explain why you should *never* run too many cows on a family ranch. She's a wife, mother, and steward; rodeo judge, barmaid, unpaid veterinarian, and the town's community development director. She's a ranchwoman. And, I submit, as archetypical in this second look as in that first. While the urban and suburban feminists whine and/or become yuppie executives, ranchwomen work like women and work like men and—somehow—find time to read, think, and even write.

The phenomenon seems to begin geographically on the shortgrass plains, west of the Hundredth Meridian and temporally with the first wave of European settlers. It is ranch rather than farm women who seem to make these contributions. Tom McGuane, in *Nobody's Angel*, made a funny and accurate distinction: "some of these ranches were run by men who thought like farmers and who usually had wives twice their size. The others were run by men who thought like cowboys, and whose wives, more often than not, were their own size or smaller, sometimes quite tiny. . . . Their women didn't talk in the tiny baby voices of the farmer-operator wives nor in the beautician rasp of the town wives." One doesn't have to go as far as McGuane ("farming was a highly evolved form of mowing the lawn") to find ranch life, even when yoked to back-breaking work and bankruptcy, more romantic than plowing.

Childhood life and adult immigration on the plains began giving birth to memoirs and novels as soon as women joined their men there: we have the works of Wilder, Cather, Sandoz, and many lesser-known memoirists such as Gila County's Agnes Morley Cleaveland. But for the purpose of this essay I want to concentrate on recent books by three women. Two are immigrants, one a native; two contemporary, one turn-of-the-century; two "aristocratic"—or at least of origins far from the blue-collar class—one hardscrabble. All three show the humor, grace, stoicism, realism, and vision that characterize the rancher's life, virtues that seem in danger of disappearance at this moment in our Republic's history.

Windbreak: A Woman Rancher on the Northern Plains, by Linda Hasselstrom, appeared in 1987, when Mrs. Hasselstrom was already known as a poet, editor, and small-press publisher. She brings a unique perspective to this book, a year's journal of ranching experience in the hard country of northwestern South Dakota; I know of no other chronicler of ranch life who was born to both ranching and writing. *Windbreak* is wry and dry, my first recommendation to anyone made starry-eyed by the more romantic literature of New Mexico and Wyoming and Montana. Of a January day that warmed to 15 below in a 60 m.p.h. wind: "The calves are either weaned or they're too depressed to bawl anymore. They just stand around the corral waiting for food, or huddle in the shed, or gnaw on the corrals. They have no bare ground to lie on except under the shed. Every night they crowd in there and the heat of their bodies warms up the mud so they emerge covered with filth—which promptly freezes. The poor things spend the time they're not eating just standing, shaggy with winter hair, covered in frozen mud, eyes glazed, looking half-dead."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Not that the animals are the only ones to suffer. A few days later, on a warmer (high of 15 above) day with hard snow, she and her husband are moving cattle:

> Only fools would even go out in cars on a day like this, and here I am on a horse . . . When I got to the creek the banks were coated with ice and the creek partly frozen over. The horse wouldn't go into the water. I decided it would be safer for me if I led him anyway, so I got off and went ahead. As soon as I waded into the creek, the water went over my boot tops and inside.
>
> Just as I got to the opposite bank the horse slipped in midstream, scared himself, and jerked back. I let go of the reins and tried to jump out of the way because I knew he'd be trying to get out of the creek. But my boots were full of water and I fell awkwardly right in the path, which is worn three feet deep. There was nowhere for the horse to go but right over me. I felt his hoofs pounding my left leg several times as I got my arms over my head. It seemed to take a very long time for him to climb over me, and I think he did some unnecessary tap dancing, but finally he was gone and everything was quiet.

She will find out, days later, that she has torn ligaments; she won't know for sure if the leg is broken or not until then. She stays inside for five days. She does not stop writing (nor does she during normal working days). On that cold day before her accident she worries about not writing enough. "Then suddenly something will force me to the typewriter or computer and I'll stay there working for hours oblivious to meals, cramp, thirst, or even George. When this happens, he obligingly fixes me something to eat. Sometimes, he simply comes up behind me, hugs me, and goes away again."

And so it goes through the year's cycle of outdoor work, writing, talking with friends, laughing, suffering. (She's still limping in June.) She is always alert and open to those glimpses of the beauty and mystery in nature that come like gifts even—maybe especially—amidst the hardest days outdoors. She notices everything. Driving past an antelope: "I love to see them take fences—antelope drop to the ground, hit the bottom wire with their back-curved horns, and snap it up while their bodies pass under, all in fragments of seconds." One thinks of the yuppie retort "Get a life," and wonders if such people would recognize a life if it bit them on the leg.

Photographing Montana 1894-1928: The Life and Work of Evelyn Cameron by Donna Lucey, seems at first to be a book far removed from Linda Hasselstrom's modest journal. It is a large-format, high-quality photographic album from a major publisher (Knopf); its subject, an aristocratic Englishwoman who moved to eastern Montana in 1889 with the quixotic aim of raising polo ponies, seems more typical of those glamorous European expatriates like Karen Blixen who roamed the world at will in the last glory days of Empire than she is of a pioneering ranchwoman. But Donna Lucey's almost accidental discovery of Evelyn Cameron's glass plate negative and, even more amazingly, of her diaries from 1893 to 1928, show that Mrs. Cameron was another who, in T.H. White's words, would "live laborious days for their delight."

She didn't start out that way. Evelyn Flower was born in 1868 to a wealthy merchant family in southern England. She married the wellborn but penniless and rather eccentric naturalist Ewen Cameron and joined the trickle of English and Scots emigrants who believed that there were fortunes to be made on the Great Plains, newly opened for settlement. There might have been. But dreamy, delicate Ewen and his adventurous but never financially minded bride were not the ones to make them. Through three ranches and all their hardships (the polo-pony notion died early) she learned to do her own hard work ("Manual labor . . . is all I care about, and, after all, is what will really make a strong woman. I like to break colts, brand calves, cut down trees, ride and work in a garden . . ."); and, eventually, to use the camera.

She seemed somehow pre-adapted to the kind of life she would lead. Though a small, almost delicate-looking woman, she possessed strength, enthusiasm, a sense of humor, and a democratic attitude toward her peers that was unusual in the strange society of English remittance men that flourished for a short time on the High Plains. In an interview for the *New York Sun* in 1908 she cheerily asserted, "I've spent January and February in a tiny Indian tent . . . with the mercury 40 degrees below zero, and our noses and chins were all blistered with the cold. And I've had my hair frizzled by lightning so that it made a crackling sound and the people at home asked me how I came to burn it. And I've had the tent blow down on me in a hurricane and have slept night after night with only a blanket between me and the frozen ground."

The record of her labors and delights are also there in the wonderful photographs. These are of incredible quality, printed from glass-plate negatives, and show a wider range of subjects than those made by any other pioneer photographer of the West. More than a few such have documented the towns and families and even the cow work; very few, if any, cared about wildlife, hunting, hawks and eagles, sheepherding, and petrified trees. She and Ewen, in addition to all the conventional ranch work, hunted, tamed birds and beasts, explored, and (in Ewen's case) wrote scientific papers. Evelyn, like so many ranch wives, worked hard at both men's and women's work; she introduced to Montana the divided skirt for riding (she was threatened with arrest in Miles City for wearing it) and nursed and coddled the difficult Ewen until he died in 1915. Everything is documented. The subjects of some of the photos are predictable; others are unique; a few (Ewen in his last year, gaunt and haggard behind an immense Trumpeter swan that he had stuffed) surreal. Some of the photographs are absolutely delightful: a family of female horsebreakers, the Buckley sisters, roping in their corral; Evelyn herself sitting on a petrified log over a canyon, holding a copy of the English magazine *The Bystander*, and again with an injured sparrow hawk perched on her finger; Ewen with tame wolves; a neighbor with a bottle-fed antelope; a goshawk on a newly caught grouse (this before telephoto lenses); an early informal rodeo roping; a cowboy with his pack of sighthounds; Evelyn again, with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

coyote pup and British flag pin. . . .

Evelyn Cameron died prematurely of complications following a routine appendectomy. My favorite of her photographs is still another self-portrait. In this one she is standing on the back of a gray horse, holding the reins in her hand. She is tanned black from the sun, bareheaded, wearing a long skirt, and grinning at someone to the left of the camera. Her smile is somehow American; you can't imagine a typical woman of her class in England showing her teeth like that. It is a revealing glimpse of a woman who had lived the life she chose, with all its rewards and hardships; a woman who once wrote in her diary: "I think of death as a delightful journey that I shall take when all my tasks are done."

Gretel Ehrlich's *The Solace of Open Spaces* was published in 1986, and is without a doubt the best known of these memoirs. Perhaps this is because the author is a contemporary writer from the coasts (both of them), as well as a gifted and poetic crafter of words. She knows the truths of life in the Big Open, in the emptiest part of what the New York and L.A. sophisticates sneer at as "overflight country," and possesses the skill and knowledge to convey something of this to the increasingly alien dominant culture.

Ehrlich was a filmmaker, originally from California but based in New York, who came to Wyoming in the 1970's to make a film on sheepherders. Her lover and partner died and she stayed on to work as a herder herself, isolated in the enormous backcountry west of the Big Horn Mountains. Eventually she came to see this harsh magnificent land as home. Much later, she married a rancher and (post *Solace*) took on the difficult task of defending ranching against its newborn legion of faddish critics.

Solace is a book about the discovery of landscape and the rediscovery of old truths, a book written with such fresh eyes that I include it in any basic package of Western reading for the newly arrived or the curious. She remembers well when she herself was the newcomer: "Was it a lie to be here? Was I an impostor? My city friends called and asked when I was going to stop hiding. Wyoming hospitality was an extravagant blend of dry humor and benign neglect. One morning a couple in a car from New York drove by. 'Ah,' they must have thought, 'a real cowgirl.' As the car slowed to go through town I found myself trotting behind it. I wanted to pound on the windows and explain that I knew every subway stop on the Seventh Avenue IRT. They speeded up and drove on. I laughed at myself, then went inside and wrote to a friend: 'True solace is finding none, which is to say, it is everywhere.'"

Which touches on a lot of the virtues common to all these books. The cheerful stoicism is obvious; solace in a world unlike that of the narrator's youth is always a condition of immigrants' stories. But there is something else there too: an appreciation of Western *character*. Most reviews of *Solace* emphasized Ehrlich's wonderful landscape writing, but veered away from her comments on her friends and on Western quirks and mores; this despite various chapters called "Other Lives," "About Men," "Friends, Foes, and Working Animals," "Just Married," and "Rules of the Game," all of which suggest an involvement in more than just the landscape — or at the very least in a landscape where the few well-adapted people achieve the dignity, as Edward Abbey said somewhere, of rare animals. Ehrlich has a wonderful ear and the ability to sketch Western character, both human and animal, with a few quick sure lines.

The rancher's life and the unfashionable parts of the West still beckon, and good writers — many or most of them female — continue to chronicle them. There are certainly good male writers in the West, but very few yet are writing about ranching. One of the best, Tom McGuane, has said wonderful things about ranchers in passing, but has yet to focus on them, at least as ranchers. One-time novelist Ralph Beers wrote movingly about the hardships of ranch life in his novel *The Blind Corral* a few years ago, then slipped off the radar screen. But true celebrations of the cattle culture continue to flow from women's pens and typewriters, even from the most unlikely and "modernist" corners. In the same year that Gretel Ehrlich's book was published, Flannery O'Connor's old correspondent Cecil Dawkins wrote *Charleyhorse*, now reprinted as a paperback whose publishers promote it as a "lesbian tour-de-force." What it *really* is is a celebration of the cow culture. Charlene Burden is no "gay activist" — she just wants to be accepted as a cowboy and finally earns the roaring approval of her town by succeeding in riding a bronc at the local rodeo.

I still don't quite understand why so many ranchwomen and cowgirls write. But the ranchwoman's third way — neither that of the new-age feminist nor that of the second-rank human being — may offer the fullest and most satisfactory role yet for strong women seeking to make something of themselves in this peculiar era of the American Republic.

Stephen Bodio is the author of A Rage for Falcons *and* Querencia.

Letter From Italy

by Thomas Fleming

There and Back Again

◆

I owe this trip to our secretary, Leann, who kept looking out for low airfares to Europe. Only a few days before she discovered Alitalia's summer half-price sale, I had received another kind invitation to spend a few days at the Centro Internazionale per Studi Lombardi (CEISLO). I bribed my wife into coming along by promising to visit Pompeii, and when I told a friend of our plans, he and his wife almost immediately decided to join us.

We began with high hopes and ill omen — I managed to sprain my ankle only two days before our departure — but the hotel I had found after four calls to Rome ("*tutto completo*") proved to be as pleasant as it is affordable. The Albergo di Campo di Fiori is located right on the Campo di Fiori (not near the Baths of Diocletian, where a popular guidebook puts it. God bless the cabdriver who would not listen to me), and it is hard to think of a livelier location. In the lightest of drizzles, my writer-cattleman friend and I sat on the roof, late at night, and watched Rome putting itself to bed. In honor of the occasion I even drank vodka, which I have not done willingly since I was 14.

I spent most of the short time I had trying to find people. Professor L.E.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rossi of Rome University had invited me, along with Chris Kopff, to deliver a paper on classics. I'm not used to discussing Greek lyric meters in Italian and managed to begin with a howling mispronunciation, but we all survived and went out to dinner with my friends. Professor Rossi treated us to one of the best dinners I've had in Italy. (How can one ever repay the kindness displayed by European friends. Even if they were to come to America, where could one take them?) Like so many good restaurants in Italy, this was very unquaint and looked the sort of place where prosperous Chicago businessmen have lunch.

I did manage to find time to visit a few churches. St. John Lateran is something of a mess, with the omnipresent signs of restoration, but Santa Maria Maggiore is still the most harmonious hodgepodge of styles in the world. A walk around the basilica is a fast-forward tour of a thousand years of architectural development. As a record of Europe, "Mary Major" is like a photo-spread on the life story of an embryo, but in the unfortunate case of our civilization, the baby is stillborn.

My friend and I catch a bus down to the Colosseum, and going in we look for a place to sit in the shade. Inevitably the talk turns to why and how the mistress of the world fell into her nonage. I have always suspected that Rome suffered the natural fate of all unitary political systems—empires or democracies. Left unchecked, a governing class will always increase its own power, and not simply out of greed and ambition for power. Problems cry out for solutions, and it is the rare ruler who is wise enough to ignore most problems: *scire omnia, non omnia persequi* was Tacitus' definition of political wisdom, although he meant it only to apply to personal matters. As Madison and Calhoun understood, the only check upon the growth of power is another power.

In our own system, it was the states and the little communities that used to protect us from the national government. In Rome, it was the conflicts between Senate and Populus, between Rome and the hinterlands, between aristocrats and business interests that preserved liberty and what is even more precious than liberty, the political vitality of the nation. The empire, when wisely administered, did its best to settle those conflicts, and as the power of the imperial bureaucracy increased, civic virtue (by which I mean the guts needed to take part in public life) declined. The more fires the government puts out, the more we are smothered in the smoke. On the whole, I think, under republic and under empire, the Romans did a better job than we have done, and it took far longer for them to lose their nerve.

Rome was uncharacteristically chilly for May. It was also full of European teenagers on holiday, and we were eager to leave. Driving out of the middle of Rome, even after being plagued by gypsies and Moroccans in the train station where we rented the car, and even after getting lost several times before striking the high road to Naples, was less terrifying than we had anticipated. We left the autostrada at Anagni for a late lunch at an out-of-the-way hotel we stumbled upon: a pasta with a sauce made of fresh artichokes, grilled lamb, and small yellow potatoes served with butter and parsley.

But this simple meal proved to be our last bit of luck that day. It was already late afternoon when I took us around the lovely old town and almost wedged the car in a steep 13th-century alley. I have almost no depth perception and cannot back up a car for ten feet, much less down a twisting street about seven-feet wide. Making no progress on the back roads, we returned to the autostrada only to be hit with mile after mile of construction.

We were headed for Avellino, because we had read of the great winery in the neighborhood. I for one will never drink it, because my taste of Avellino consisted of a rush-hour traffic jam in the center of town as we fruitlessly attempted to find a quiet hotel. (I stupidly rejected a place in a suburb perched on a hill overlooking the town. Too modern.) The real horror did not begin until after dark, when we realized that we had come unintentionally into Salerno, which we rode around and around looking for an hotel with a garage.

As our ill luck would have it, we found the Hotel Garibaldi near the marina. Visitors to the Bay of Naples always sing the same song: foul air, dirty bathrooms, unchanged bed linens. Our room had the particular distinction of facing the enclosed courtyard, which smelled like a locker room in Herculaneum, sealed under mud and ash for 1900 years and excavated for our benefit. The place did have its charms, though: an ancient soft drink cooler with small coke bottles two-thirds filled. There were several empty beer bottles decorating the room, and in one of them was a bunch of faded flowers. Our hostess offered them to us with the gracious smile of a great lady bestowing a favor. I did not have the heart to refuse. Our hotel, which only occupied two floors, was quiet enough, but the upper floors of the building were more lively. What an odd couple, one of the ladies remarked, seeing an older man riding up the elevator with a teenage girl in hot pants.

I'll break off the slide-show here and say that Paestum is still as magnificent as Shelley said it was, although you can no longer see through the columns of Poseidon's temple. My ankle gave out halfway through Pompeii (I knew my injury would come in handy), and leaving my wife to wander the ruins, I went back to the Hotel Santuario with my friends. The hotel, as well as being quiet and rather pleasant, is a marvel of cleanliness and efficiency. It was four o'clock, and we had not had lunch, but the assistant manager was kind enough to prepare us pannini with prosciutto and cheese and several bottles of a somewhat fizzy but drinkable wine. We went to mass in the church across the piazza, where a young nun sang popular-sounding hymns with a passionate intensity that was almost alarming. My friend and I sat outside the hotel, watching *la vita in piazza* until my cigar caused a minor row with a crowd of young people who affected to cough and wheeze. (I did the same when they lit up cigarettes.)

We spent a week in Umbria and Tuscany. Orvieto, Cortona, Chiusi (almost all the Etruscan sites are impossible to visit, but the Etruscan museum is good and the market better). Assisi is the worst kind of tourist trap, part Disney World part YMCA camp. (To be fair, I should say that an Italian friend visited Assisi a few weeks later and fell in love with the place.) I did not even want to eat there, and we had an unsatisfactory lunch at a marina on Lake Trasimene. No sign of Hannibal,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but the North Africans are definitely re-invading Italy.

The immigration problem in Italy has not improved, and by May the most serious debate was over what to do about the Albanians, who had been coming in such large numbers that the news footage reminded me of Jean Raspail's *Camp of the Saints*. For all their problems, the Italians (like the French) are capable of decisive action, and in early August the government—taking a page out of Raspail—assembled a flotilla to repatriate the Albanians. After sending all but a thousand back to Albania, the government began to weaken, promising $40 and a suit of clothes to everyone willing to go home. Not surpisingly, most of the emigrants want to stay. I know that it would take a lot more than $40 to make me leave, if I had a chance to remain permanently in Italy. Ultimately, the government tricked the Albanians, with vague promises, into being dispersed and eventually dismissed.

I could have stayed a year in our little hotel in Orvieto, right on the *corso*. We ate several times in a superb restaurant not far from the cathedral, which had beautiful frescoes—classical and with pure colors that reminded me of early Picasso—by Luca Signorelli. Most of Signorelli's greatest work was painted over by later artists, but Orvieto had the good fortune to be poor. In Cortona, Signorelli's birthplace, they preserve his memory, and I was treated to a discourse by the owner of a bookshop.

I will not describe how I dragged the party through Montepulciano without finding lunch or how we fled in panic from the tour bus hordes in San Gimignano and stayed in Colle Val d'Elsa, which was quiet as a grave, or how I was overwhelmed—and this for the third time—by the crowd of unwashed tourists that have made Siena impossible. In the cathedral, my wife pointed out something I had not thought of before. Set in the pavement are a series of mosaics representing pagan as well as biblical stories, Roman emperors as well as popes, saints beside sibyls. The great pulpit (carved by Nicola Pisano) counterpoints the seven liberal arts with scenes from the life of Christ. Here it was—in stone, paint, and marble—the great synthesis of late medieval civilization, that is to say our civilization.

The high point of our touring, for me, were the several days we spent doing virtually nothing in Bibiena, a town in the Casentino north of Arezzo and east of Florence. I had hoped to find Peter Russell, the poet and friend of Ezra Pound, but he was away in Milan, lecturing. In the mountainous Casentino, May is too early for the Italian tourists who come to escape the heat and to visit the various Franciscan shrines. Dante took refuge here with the Guidi, whose *castello* in nearby Poppi is being restored. My friend and I had our picture taken beneath the bust of Dante. "Three poets," is the suggested title.

The air was chilly, and it even snowed on us as we drove up to the Hermitage of St. Romualdo. During visiting hours, the monks are all in their cells, but they do gather for meals and for services. They spend the rest of the day either praying or working their garden plots. There are worse ways to live, and I can well imagine, as our world grinds itself down into the mire of lies, vice, and cowardice, some new monastic movement rising up to rescue the victims of the sexual "revolutions."

We spend our last week in Lombardia, enjoying the hospitality of Giuditta and Giuseppe Podestà at CEISLO. Our discussions turn on recent events in Central and Eastern Europe, and the prospects for European unity. On a broader level, we talk about the decline of civilizations and what can be done to slow or arrest the descent into sloth and materialism. I cite the reforms of the Emperor Heraclius, who created a stable class of peasant-soldiers who defended Byzantium for almost a millennium, but the professoressa is not impressed. Byzantium, she argued, is a great example of conservatism without creativity. I bring up Byzantine hymnody, mosaics, and historiography and am embarrassed to find she probably knows more about Byzantine culture than I do. Time for a tactical retreat.

Dinners at CEISLO are great occasions, not only for cooking. One night we are surprised by a visit by my friend Elvio Conti, who is very active in the Lega Lombarda. He brings with him a recent recruit to the Lega, a retired businessman who represents the growing acceptance of the Lega in bourgeois circles. They are immediately invited to dinner. So is the baker, the local Liberal Party leader, who arrives with the dessert. We are in for it now, I think, a real shouting match. Instead, we have the liveliest discussion, dominated by the new recruit, who had been a buyer and executive with the Rinascente chain (by far the largest retailer—supermarkets, department stores—in Italy).

His knowledge of the world and his hardheaded grasp of business and economics impresses even the skeptical Signora Podestà. My liberal friend, Signor Laini, is passionate in defending his party and in criticizing the Lega, but on many fundamental points agrees with its critique of the *partitocrazia*.

What most suprised me in this and subsequent discussions with various people was the general hostility to the Persian Gulf War. From the newspapers (Italian as well as American) I had gathered that there was a great deal of public support for the war, countered only by a minority of Communists, the members of the Leghe, and the most faithful Catholics. What I found instead were several lukewarm supporters, who thought Italy needed access to the oil but disliked the way President Bush handled the whole affair. The opponents, on the other hand, tended to be vehement and perhaps anti-American. I asked a number of observers what they thought the real percentage was for support and opposition, and the answer was always 50-50.

One night we are joined by a group of students and local friends of CEISLO, and there are several tense moments, until I succeed in explaining my own position, which is patriotic anti-imperialism. The only real argument that breaks out is between me and the other lady in our party, who defends the war with considerable heat. I grow even hotter and pull the dirty trick of switching back into Italian.

What is most impressive about this evening is not so much what we are saying as that we can have this conversation at all. Here we are in a small town in a company that includes a librarian, a young lady who works in a beauty parlor, and a young man who sells medical instruments, and the conversation is far more serious than what

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you could hear in most faculty clubs. The reason for this is partly the Italian interest in politics, but it is more a function of CEISLO's presence in the village of Olginate. I wonder if American "think-tanks" would have a more significant impact if they began to involve the people in the neighborhood?

The next day we visit the mayor of Lecco, a very prudent and able man presiding over the upgrading of Lecco to the status of *provincia*. I note that he has a sister cities arrangement with many cities but none in America. He grows uncomfortable, explaining that Lecco is a commune d'Europa. Later, someone explains to me that the mayor is in a difficult position. As a Christian Democrat he belongs to the party that sent Italian soldiers to the gulf war, and the left is waiting for any opportunity to accuse him of being pro-American.

We cannot eat and argue all the time, and we spend our days visiting Lecco, Bergamo, and Como, where we meet Elvio Conti, who takes us on a cruise of Lago di Como. We eat lunch in Menaggio—real Lombard fare from the lakes: a hearty dish of buckwheat and cheese that can see a man through an entire day of hard labor, and fishes from the lake—smoke-dried lavorello and fresh tinca. After several bottles of wine, our heads might as well be at the bottom of the lake, but Conti takes us to a little bar for more wine and shows us the hotel where the Lega Lombarda held a rally. The proprietor is away, but his son buys us a grappa. (Note, we had never before tasted anything drinkable called grappa, but this is very good.)

Back in Como, we are taken shopping, and although it is late and we are due back in Olginate, Conti signals us to follow his car. My wife grows impatient, since we have no idea where we are going, but we end up in the very silk factory she had been begging me to find. Somewhere in my increasingly incoherent Italian, Elvio had figured out where we really wanted to go. That is the mystery of life in Italy, where people never seem to plan anything or even answer a letter, but they are always two steps ahead of you in doing a kindness.

Our last little adventure was a trip to Milano to see the cathedral and to meet journalist Mario Marcolla and a young man who wants to do an interview for *Christianita*, the official organ of the Alleanza Cattolica. Marcolla is the Italian translator of Russell Kirk and a real expert on Anglo-American conservative thought. We go to the top of the Duomo in the forest of *gulie* and stare at the Madonnina. I do not see *Il Resegone*, the mountain that looms above Lecco, despite the assurance of that Milanese comic-book miscreant, Cattivik.

From old Milan, the city of faith—commercial as well as religious—we descend to the blaring world of Cattivik's Milan and try to have a quiet conversation in the roar of a police unit's mobile generator and a phony Peruvian band. (Anyone who speaks Spanish can pose as an authentic Andean musician.) Marcolla observes, "*Sempre la festa*. . . .Morning, noon, and night, it's party time, and nobody works, and they wonder why we don't catch up with Germany and Switzerland."

Like all men who love their country, Marcolla is hard on Italian vices and may not realize how much worse off we are in the United States. From his (affectionate but deprecating) description of his son (allegedly a libertarian who likes Ayn Rand), I expect to meet what Lew Rockwell would call a real "modal." Instead I find myself shaking hands with a polite and hardworking young man. I had friends in South Carolina, who were always complaining about their daughter's laziness and rudeness, when in fact they had reared a studious young lady with beautiful manners. Does this mean, I wonder, that it is bad parents and bad citizens who cannot criticize what they claim to love?

Italy is currently undergoing a serious constitutional crisis, and all parties seem to understand that something has to change, if the government is ever to clean up the massive fiscal corruption and begin to do battle with organized crime. Italians are full of spleen against the *partitocrazia*, and my friends in the Lega Lombarda are rueful in comparing their own country with Switzerland, but behind all of the anger and all of the bitterness, it is impossible to miss the passionate love of Italy (especially their little part of it) that animates every Italian I have ever met, including a Rockford lawyer who had just returned from a month's visit. I met him in a local Italian grocery, and he could not stop talking about the beauties of Tuscany and Sicily. His one worry was that Americans (he was born in this country) would spoil it. I agreed with him.

I recently attended Rockford's Festa Italiana and listened to a foul-mouthed comedian telling ethnic jokes. (He got nervous when he realized that the priest he had been needling was, in fact, the bishop.) After asking how many Siciliani, how many Baresi, how many Napoletani were in the audience, he concluded by saying, "The important thing, though, is that we're all Italians, right?" Only one person (probably not an Italian) asked if there were any Americans. But Sal Richards is probably right. Being an Italian, even an Italian-American of the third generation, means something, but what does it mean to be an American? Most of us don't have the faintest idea.

Thomas Fleming is the editor of Chronicles.

Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

A Good Job for the Federal Government

◆

There is good reason to be suspicious of the U.S. national park system. You can start with its origins.

In 1864, an act of Congress seized the first parkland for the federal government, evicting some homesteaders from the Yosemite Valley and directing the state of California to administer the place. In the context of the Civil War, maybe one more little bit of federal usurpation hardly mattered, but things went downhill from there. Barely twenty-five years later, the feds decided they didn't like the way California was running things, and grabbed Yosemite for themselves.

That they did this at the urging of John Muir, sappy Scottish pantheist and the original California flake, is another reason to be suspicious. Muir had little faith in omnipotent deity, but a lot in omnipotent government: God had pre-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

served the trees so far, he wrote, but "only Uncle Sam" could save them now.

As you might suppose, Muir admired Thoreau and Emerson, and maybe someone can explain to me sometime why New England individualism—even when transplanted to California by a Scot—always seems to lead to expanded federal power. Anyway, as a promotional movie about Yosemite now says, with no trace of embarrassment or irony, "the [federal] parks were our first massively endowed works of art."

Of course, if it comes to a choice between Yosemite and *Piss Christ*, there's no question which side I'm on. Still, it was with a jaundiced eye and a readiness to be unimpressed that I drove from the Bay Area up through the California gold country last spring. Yosemite expects three million visitors this year, and my wife and I were off to be two of them.

It was dark when we got there, so we didn't see much on the way in. Most of our fellow tourists at the lodge were giving off hearty emanations of the backpacking sort, so much so that I was secretly pleased when the young couple ahead of me at the store bought a carton of Camels, a six-pack of King Cobra malt liquor, and a pint of peppermint schnapps. Party time.

Given my political and cultural misgivings (to get to the point), you can imagine my surprise the next morning when I was completely captivated by the place.

There's more to it than natural beauty—although of course the place is beautiful, especially with snow still on the peaks and the waterfalls at full freshet. But I've seen beautiful: Greek islands, Cornish cliffs, Italian lakes, Javanese volcanos, fern jungles in Jamaica, rice paddies in Orissa. . . . I've been lucky, and I can place-drop with the best of them. Yosemite, though—well, it *moved* me, in a way these other gorgeous places never did.

I came away puzzled about that, but ready to ignore my anti-statist principles if that's what it takes to keep college boys from painting their fraternities' letters on El Capitan, or some Trumpoid developer from building a gated resort that we common folk can't visit.

A couple of months later, these heretical thoughts were reinforced at the Grand Canyon, which we visited on our way back to North Carolina.

We'd driven from Palo Alto down to Bakersfield, where the music on the radio, the accents in the filling stations, and the general seediness of the roadscape made me feel right at home. I regretted that we didn't have time to stop for an Okie Girl beer and a prayer meeting at a roadside tabernacle, but we pressed on past borax works and Joshua trees into Arizona.

Now, when it comes to desert scenery, I'm afraid I'm pretty much tone-deaf. Most of what we were driving through looked to me like West Virginia after the strip miners got through with it, and as we approached the Canyon I was ready with observations like "This would take care of our landfill needs for a century."

Once again, though, I was confounded by a remarkable *place*. In the event I sounded like Richard Nixon at the Great Wall: "This really is a . . . grand . . . canyon." I didn't find it beautiful, exactly—in fact, it was sort of appalling. But it was moving in much the same way Yosemite had been.

Later, driving across Kansas, I had a lot of time to think about this. What was it about these places that knocked the smart-aleck right out of me?

It wasn't the "wilderness" angle. From time to time as a teenage spelunker I stood where I was certain no one had ever stood before, and, sure, it was a kick. But this was a different, more subtle thrill.

I remembered the year we lived in Jerusalem, and the time we took a visiting friend, an American Protestant, to the Holy Sepulchre. She was almost literally sickened by the incense and candles and images, by the Italian Franciscans gliding about, the creepy-looking Greeks and sinister Armenians, not to mention the shabby Copts and Syrian Jacobites, and the ragged Ethiopians in their mud huts on the roof.

None of this had much to do with her image of the hill far away where the old rugged cross stood, and she was relieved to discover "Gordon's Calvary" and the so-called Garden Tomb, located in a quiet, sunny park outside the Old City's walls. These spots have nothing to do with Good Friday and Easter ("Chinese" Gordon's crackbrain theories notwithstanding), but she found them "much more like it was, don't you think?"

Well, yeah. But I prefer the traditional sites. Even if they aren't where Christ died and was buried, they are holy places. Centuries of piety have made them that.

Just so, I realized that, for me, the appeal of Yosemite and the Canyon lay largely in the fact that so many *had* stood there before. What I liked most about those ancient rocks and rivers was their quite recent past, the fossil evidence of excursion trains, tent villages, and pseudo-Indian lodges, reminders of tourism in the Age of Steam. What moved me was the thought that Teddy Roosevelt and the ubiquitous Frederick Law Olmsted and old John Muir and millions of others had marveled at the same sights I was seeing.

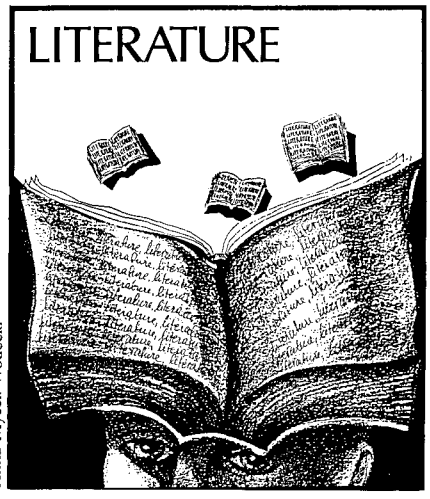
In a sense, even I had been there before. Those sights were almost clichés, familiar from postcards and home movies and my boyhood stamp collection. When I saw Yosemite's Mirror Lake—which is now Mirror Marsh, inexorably on the way to becoming Mirror Meadow—I thought, damn it, that's not *right*. That's not what the stereopticon slide looks like. That's not what Teddy Roosevelt saw. Let's get in the Corps of Engineers and *dredge* that sucker.

So virgin wilderness may have its charms, but give me a worldly old courtesan of a place, where I can think about those who've been there before me. Given my choice of mighty redwoods, I'll take the one people used to drive Model T's through.

You know, it's funny, but going to the Grand Canyon and Yosemite made me feel like an American, just as visiting the Holy Sepulchre made me feel like a Christian—part of a tradition. Caressed by a hundred million eyes, mere natural wonders have become national icons, part of our cultural patrimony. My libertarian friends will disagree, but it seems to me that maintaining these secular holy places is a pretty good thing for the federal government to do.

John Shelton Reed writes from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and has never hugged a tree he wasn't climbing at the time.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Plundered Province: The American West as Literary Region

by Gregory McNamee

"Let a philosophic observer commence a journey from the savages of the Rocky Mountains eastwardly towards our seacoast," Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1808, after he had learned of such matters from the reports of Lewis and Clark. "These he would observe in the earliest stage of association, living under no law but that of nature, subsisting and covering themselves with the flesh and skins of wild beasts. He would next find those on our frontiers in the pastoral state, raising domestic animals to supply the defects of hunting. Then succeed our own semi-barbarous citizens, the pioneers of the advance of civilization, and so in his progress he would meet the gradual shades of improving man until he would reach his, as yet, most improved state in our seaport towns. This, in fact, is equivalent to a survey, in time, of the progress of man from the infancy of creation to the present day."

It should stand as little more than a curio of proto-social Darwinism, but Jefferson's survey instead offers a program for the great mass of writing about the American West, from James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, written at a time when the Connecticut River marked the Western frontier, to Louis L'Amour's ongoing saga of the Sackett clan, where the vicious wilderness of catamounts and rogue Indians stands opposed to the virtuous advance of Eastern mores. Although students of westward expansion have rejected Jefferson's continuum since its last gasp in Frederick Jackson Turner's *The Frontier in American History* (1920), it continues to thrive in the artificial canyons of Manhattan, where a sizable branch of the publishing industry still elaborates the myth of the West and of the savage frontier.

The myth and the mythmaking apparatus are nearly as old as the nation, fueled by the accounts of explorers like James Ohio Pattie and John Charles Frémont, whose legendary lying fixed his name in American history. It presents a West of steel-jawed, rugged individualists, of cruelly deceptive aborigines (with Comanches, Apaches, and Sioux as the favorite villains), of fifth-column outlaws and renegades foolishly attempting to thwart Manifest Destiny. Alone of the planet's geographical regions, the American West has had the dubious distinction of spawning a literature that bears precious little resemblance to reality, of providing the stage for a morality play that will not end.

The industrial mythmaking process owes its origins not only to explorers' embellishments and the tall tales of mountain men, a popular genre in the 1840's, but to the romantic journalism that accompanied the first great westward migrations — Mark Twain's exaggerated tales of the jumping frog of Calaveras County, Charles Lummis's paradisaical accounts of the Pueblo Indians in their state of natural innocence, Bret Harte's depictions of the whiskey-soaked raw frontier. In the manner of contemporary journalists, their lesser progeny seized on the unusual human-interest story, ignoring the mundane realities of life in mining camps, fishing villages, and dusty farmyards. They were especially fond of celebrating violent deeds and of elevating common criminals to the rank of folk heroes, sociopathic exemplars of the breed of people who would settle the wild frontier.

A case in point is William Bonney, a/k/a Kid Antrim, a/k/a Billy the Kid. Bonney was an unlucky cowhand caught up in the so-called Lincoln County War of the 1870's, a New Mexican feud between rival cattlemen. In the five-year course of this bloody business vendetta, Bonney is known to have killed only three men, a day's take for your average cocaine overlord; thanks to his having chosen the losing side, a fixed jury sentenced him to hang for a murder he did not commit. He escaped, only to be shot unarmed a few days later. The journalists were there all along to misinform an eager nation of his deeds (Larry McMurtry's 1988 novel *Anything for Billy* does a fine job of pegging their role in the unfortunate young man's posthumous rise to fame), and within a year of his death eight books with Billy the Kid as their monstrous protagonist saw print. The industry has continued unabated ever since, continuing to advance the notion that Bonney killed 21 men in cold blood, one for every year he lived.

The Kid's legend is one of many in a fabulous roster: Calamity Jane, Wild Bill Hickok, Wyatt Earp and the shootout at the OK Corral (which should properly be called the massacre at the OK Corral, for Earp's enemies, as was his custom, were without weapons), the Wild Bunch, the Hole in the Wall Gang, Johnny Ringo. These are among the fruits of newspaper reporters' overactive imaginations, fed to an overly credulous Eastern readership — Jefferson's civilizing force — that demanded more and more tales of the savage West.

And the (American) East was not the only contributor to the process. Karl May (1842-1912), a German hack writer imprisoned for fraud,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

passed his jailhouse days by inventing a cowboy hero named "Old Shatterhand" and his noble Indian companion Winnetou. May had never seen America, but he wrote 15 hugely popular novels in the 1860's and 70's wherein civilization — more exactly, German civilization — overcame savagery in a mythical West that resembles the unnamed isle of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, itself one of the first works in European literature to be set in the Americas. May's novels continue to sell, and they propel German tourists to visit the American West by the hundreds of thousands each year.

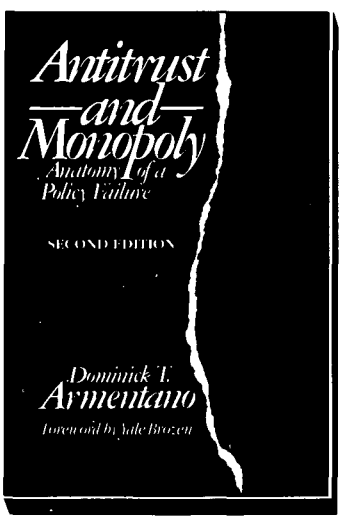
Had May ever seen the places he wrote about, he likely would not have changed a word. Zane Grey (1872-1939), an Ohio dentist who moved to Arizona in 1907 to take up a new career as a writer, traveled the West endlessly to capture the social and natural detail that provides local color, but his most famous novels — *Riders of the Purple Sage*, *The Call of the Canyon*, *Wanderer of the Wasteland*, like his forty-odd other adventure stories — are no more authentic than May's, except in incidentals of the local dialect. Neither are those of his famous successor Louis L'Amour, whose vaunted research did not save him from perpetuating the same genre-locked romantic myths of black-spittled outlaws and lone noble heroes. His Sackett saga, a multivolume mass of sloppy cliché, might as easily be set in the highlands of Scotland or the Kalahari for all the historical truths it advances.

Max Brand, Max Evans, Terry Johnston, Jim Miller, Bill Reno — the pulp-romance tradition continues, urged along by a constant readership. Like the vast run of bodice-ripper gothic and science-fiction novels, which share many other similarities with Westerns, their books are mass-produced and interchangeable, the literary equivalent of the barbed-wire strand or the Colt revolver. In their flood, books that speak to the real West, that takes the region as something other than a vermilion-and-ochre backdrop, drown unnoticed: J.P.S. Brown's *The Forests of the Night*, Charles McNichols' *Crazy Weather*, James Welch's *Fool's Crow*, and, perhaps the greatest novel ever set west of the Hundredth Meridian, Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, to name but a few.

Hollywood's voracious appetite for formulaic stories doesn't help matters. Evelyn Waugh hit the mark when he observed, "Each book purchased for motion pictures has some individual quality, good or bad, that has made it remarkable. It is the work of a great array of highly paid and incompatible writers to distinguish the quality, separate it, and obliterate it." Why write authentically when *Dances With Wolves*, the most nakedly cynical lone-good-guy-against-the-world oater of recent years, is the hit of the day? For every historically and culturally faithful look at the West — and in this regard Roman Polanski's *Chinatown*, Don Siegel's *The Shootist*, and Jonathan Wacks' *Powwow Highway* earn top marks — there are a dozen spaghetti Westerns, Sam Peckinpah shoot-em-ups, and mediocrities along the lines of *Little Big Man*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, and *The Missouri Breaks*. There is little hope for improvement in an industry where the squeaky-clean Marie Osmond is cast as Josephine Marcus, Wyatt Earp's prostitute wife, and the constantly mugging Emilio Estevez is thought to make a suitable Billy the Kid. It appears that we'll have to make do with *Blazing Saddles*, and wonder when Arnold Schwarzenegger will take on the role of George Armstrong Custer.

Neither does it help that, in the main, academia continues to relegate both Western history and Western literature to the infra-dig confines of the overview course. As a geographical literature, writing about the American West comprises an area as large as Europe — but no sensible teacher would ever think to offer a survey embracing Homer, Petrarch, Knut Hamsun, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Thomas Mann, and the *guslars* of Macedonia with any hope of intelligible discovery. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon to hear of courses that take in Mark Twain, Mary Austin, Willa Cather, Robinson Jeffers, Ivan Doig, Frank Norris, Richard Hugo, Wright Morris, and N. Scott Momaday on the mere grounds of their supposed geographical proximity. Had Robert Frost remained in the city of his youth, San Francisco, and Mary McCarthy in Seattle, they

THE MYTHS OF ANTITRUST



A thoroughly documented indictment of U.S. antitrust policy, ***Antitrust and Monopoly*** draws on all the classic antitrust cases in history to illustrate that the laws have not been employed against monopolies, but have been used instead to restrain competition.

"The single best book on this vital public policy issue, and it should become a, if not the standard work in economics, history, and political science."
—PUBLIC CHOICE

"Skillfully honed, eloquent, Armentano's book must be mastered by all who would be heard on this issue."
—BUSINESS HISTORY REVIEW

"This book should be on the required reading list of every course in antitrust in law schools, business schools, and departments of economics."
—DONALD DEWEY
Professor of Economics
Columbia University

The INDEPENDENT INSTITUTE

6 Figures • 4 Tables • Index • 306 pages, Paperback, Item #4003
$19.95 plus postage ($2.00 per book; CA residents add Sales Tax)

ORDER TOLL FREE 1-800-927-8733
Credit card orders only. 24 hours a day.

Available at better bookstores or order by mail and receive the complete catalog:
The Independent Institute, Dept. AA2, 134 Ninety-Eighth Avenue, Oakland, CA 94603

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would likely be required reading in that survey as well.

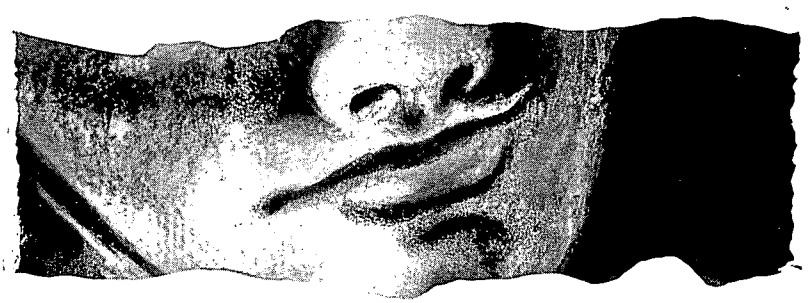
The time has come to stop speaking of Western American literature at all. The term has increasingly little meaning except as a buzzword for critics for whom "the new regionalism" is indeed new; it evokes not Thomas McGuane but ten-gallon hats, high noon and not ten seconds till midnight, and it will not suffice. Not long before his death last year A.B. Guthrie remarked that "a good book is not 'regional.' It is a good book because it is a good book. . . . William Faulkner and Eudora Welty weren't regional writers." Sound words, surely. But, Guthrie went on to add, "Trying to fight the [Western] myth, I tell you, is a losing fight. I'm afraid people want to think about the West in terms of Tombstone." They will do so as long as the categories by which writing set outside the Boston-Washington corridor is arranged remain fixed in booksellers' racks, publishers' lists, and college offerings.

Sequester Gary Snyder, Gretel Ehrlich, Leslie Silko, Frank Waters, Barry Lopez, Terry Tempest Williams, Amy Tan, Rick Bass, and Rolando Hinojosa-Smith in a room and you'd surely get lively discussion about the West as a place and as a source of inspiration. You would not, however, be left with a literature in the sense of, say, the cocktail-circuit New York School of poets, and surely not of the fisticuffs of Norman Mailer and Gore Vidal battling one another in a city and culture far, far away. If writing that merely happens to be set in the West is of a superior quality, then we are properly addressing American literature, period. (As long, that is, as the canon-busters permit the notion of American literature itself to stand.)

Such distinctions are never likely to make their way into the consciousness of the trans-Fall Line East, where the important cultural decisions are made. A region can be a center; in the case of Western writers, it's a corral with a gate that can't be kicked open, as claustrophobically confining as one of Don De Lillo's Manhattan lofts. Just as the American West remains an economic colony, it is sure to remain a cultural colony as well, the source of comforting mortal tales of civilization's progress for Atlantic seaboard living rooms. His Bill of Rights daily erodes, but Jefferson's survey of the American landscape endures.

Gregory McNamee is a freelance writer and editor living in Tucson, Arizona.

LIBERAL ARTS



A FAMILY MAN WITH AN APPETITE FOR WOMEN

As *Los Angeles Times* reporter Paul Richter wrote on June 7, "At 59, [Edward] Kennedy is the patriarch of a legendary political family, standard-bearer of American liberalism, conscientious family man and lawmaker with few peers. He is also, in some portraits, a man of flawed judgment with an appetite for women, liquor and ostentatious risks."

—*from* Notable Quotables *of the Media Research Center, June 24, 1991*

Notes From a Writer of Trash

by Richard S. Wheeler

The most important datum about Western fiction is that it is at the absolute bottom of the literary heap, somewhere below pornography. English professors would cavil at calling Westerns literature; they prefer to categorize Westerns as subliterature, or entertainment.

Few, if any, educated people read Westerns. The higher the cultural and academic attainments of the reader, the less likely he will be to crack one open. He will read other category fiction, such as mysteries or science fiction, without embarrassment. But you will never catch him reading Westerns. Westerns sell least well in the upper Midwest and East, the areas with the largest numbers of college-educated people. They sell best across the South and in the Rocky Mountain states, where tastes are the most primitive. They sell around military bases, a sure sign that they appeal to the semiliterate. It is known also that Westerns appeal most to graying males, yeoman blue-collar types who have never gone beyond high school, allegedly the least imaginative and progressive elements in society.

Because Westerns are not considered significant literature, they are not usually reviewed. Most newspaper editors of the book page have never assigned a category Western for review. The *Library Journal* and *Kirkus* review a few hardback Westerns for the edification of librarians, but that is about the extent of attention paid to category Western fiction. You will find nothing about Westerns or those who write them in book news columns. You will not see Western authors on TV or radio talk shows. Western authors are never lionized at parties, and acquire no groupies, fans, or imitators. You will not find Western authors at the National Book Awards. They are never asked to lecture at great universities and neither do they become adjunct professors. Here and there you'll find college courses on Western fiction, but it usually turns out that the professor didn't mean *that* kind of Western fiction; he meant Wallace Stegner and Edward Abbey and Tom McGuane and James Welch and Louise Erdrich.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You will rarely see Western novels or authors come under academic or critical scrutiny, except to condemn them.

This is not the case in more respectable categories. Mystery authors are much acclaimed, even among literary professors and critics. People like Rex Stout, Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, or John MacDonald are regularly studied, admired, analyzed, and acknowledged to be serious and gifted novelists. More recently Elmore Leonard has been accorded that status —but not for the several excellent Westerns he wrote before turning to mysteries. Nothing illustrates the difference in attitude better than encyclopedia entries. The New Columbia Encyclopedia, for example, has entries on Agatha Christie, Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and Rex Stout, but not one for John MacDonald. When it comes to Western writers, things are different: there is a patronizing entry on Zane Grey, and one for Conrad Richter, and that's it. There is no entry for Pulitzer Prize-winner A.B. Guthrie Jr., Dorothy Johnson, Max Brand (Frederick Faust), Luke Short (Frederick Glidden), Ernest Haycox, Walter von Tilberg Clark, William McLeod Raine, Will Henry (Henry Allen), Jack Schaefer, or Louis L'Amour. One must ask: are all these people unworthy of recognition, or is it simply their misfortune to have written in a field that has always been patronized by critics and professors?

In recent years academic leftists have begun to assail category Western fiction. For example, English Professor William Kittredge of the University of Montana regularly attacks Westerns as being racist, sexist, and imperialist, and makes no bones about his hope that Westerns will vanish forever. His views are replicated by, roughly, the membership of the Modern Language Association. They associate Westerns with a frontier period when white men behaved shamefully: exterminating Indians, ruining the land, wiping out buffalo, demolishing the fragile ecology of the West, all from greed. Moreover, they associate Westerns with false and romantic views of human nature, in which self-reliant people achieve their goals, and such virtues as courage, loyalty, and integrity really count. Such people, many of them in the publishing industry itself, regularly pronounce the death of Westerns, and one detects malice in the threnody: Westerns obstruct the proper understanding of a guilty, racist, voracious white America and delude people into supposing they control their own destinies.

In addition to all these burdens, Westerns suffer from an image fixation. Almost anyone can tell you what a Western is: it's a story that involves a lot of horseback riding and six-gun fights; a story in which the characters are cardboard, especially the women; a story full of action and short on theme; a story in which the hero will say "Yup," and "No, Ma'am" to a schoolmarm heroine and then ride off into the sunset; a story in which the author does not deal seriously with the human condition, but seeks merely to entertain; a story that presumes the superiority of white civilization and the inferiority of Indian or Hispanic culture. Everyone knows this; it's a given, and that is why intelligent and educated and sensitive people don't read Westerns and why professors condemn them.

But what everyone "knows" really isn't accurate. The majority of modern Westerns bears little relationship to any of these clichés and assumptions. No other genre is so beset by wrong preconceptions, held by people who have no intention of ever finding out whether their notions are accurate.

Thus, the environment in which Western fiction is produced is largely arid. People on the left dislike Westerns for ideological reasons, while people on the right ignore them as trash literature fashioned by pulp writers. People in all walks of life think of them as horse opera or shoot-em-ups. Then add to that the universal scorn or indifference of academics and critics and the pop press (you don't see Western authors featured in *People* magazine or the Sunday newspaper supplements or the checkout counter tabloids).

Miraculously, Westerns refuse to die, even when the odds are as long as they are. Each month, the drugstore paperback racks acquire a gaudy collection of new titles. Each month several hardcover publishers of Westerns offer more of their wares to librarians. People are buying them even without the prompting of publicity, critical acclaim, or social approval. In spite of the indifference and hostility, Westerns flourish, and the worse the environment, the more it prospers.

How can that be? The most obvious reason is that there exists in the United States a large pool of literate people, many of them ardent readers, who are utterly indifferent to fad and fashion, hype, media blitzes, academic and ideological vogues, and politics. These people are not finding the type of storytelling they enjoy in mainstream literature and turn instead to category novels, especially those in which traditional moral and ethical values inform the story. They make up their own minds about what to read, and are therefore relatively immune to the blandishments of ideologues. For them, Westerns speak to what is possible and exciting and grand in human nature; to the heroic. These people are not necessarily old, not necessarily traditional, but simply independent. They'll continue to buy and read Westerns, no matter how scathing the condemnations of academics and critics.

Another factor is the unusual malle-

LIBERAL ARTS

VIVE LA FRANCE

Interviewer: "In Anglo-Saxon countries, most men prefer the company of other men."

Mme. Edith Cresson, 57, Prime Minister of France: "Yes, but the majority of these men are homosexual—perhaps not the majority—but in the USA there are already 25 percent of them and in England and Germany it is much the same. You cannot imagine it in the history of France. . . . Frenchmen are much more interested in women; Anglo-Saxon men are not interested in women and this is a problem that needs analysis. . . . A man who isn't interested in women is in some way a little maimed."

—*from the London* Observer, *June 16, 1991*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ability of the Western form. From the beginning, Westerns have adapted themselves to contemporary belief. Early stories had a great deal to do with character and the fate imposed by character. Later stories dealt with the lone individual preserving his integrity and life against the forces of social conformity. In recent decades, they have reflected modern racial concerns: the protagonists are likely to be Indians or Hispanics or their white sympathizers, while the antagonists are invariably rapacious whites. The perfect example is *Dances With Wolves*, Michael Blake's eminently successful book and screenplay in which the Indians and a white ally are the protagonists and the army is the antagonist. To anathematize all Westerns as racist, sexist, and imperialist, as Professor Kittredge does, is to miss the radical differences in Westerns from decade to decade and the flexibility of the genre. Westerns have frequently reflected the social concerns of modern times, even though they are nominally about the frontier and the settlement of the continent. And even in the bad old days when many stories treated Indians as antagonists, there was a powerful countervailing sympathy for Indians whose lands and living were ripped away from them. I do not know of any period in which Westerns lacked sympathy for Indians, although many early stories revealed a white cultural chauvinism that held that the red man's salvation was to become like whites, or else die off as a result of their atavistic ways.

Another, and perhaps the boldest, of my propositions is that some Westerns are excellently written. Beleaguered Western novelists, operating in an arid and hostile milieu, have been forced to tell good stories and tell them well, or face extinction. Some Westerns are amazingly powerful. Western novelists have also escaped the literary fads of minimalism and nihilism that have turned serious literary fiction into a sea of decadence and triviality. The Western novelist can and does treat large themes—justice, death, love, loyalty, mercy, personal integrity—themes that mainstream novelists consider hopelessly clichéd and *passé*. Readers of Westerns therefore find the very grandeur and depth of understanding that one has always associated with the best mainstream authors.

For several years now, one of New York's most important agents, Nat Sobel, has attended the conventions of Western Writers of America, just to see what the Western genre is all about. His clients are largely important mainstream novelists. A year or so ago he shared his observations about Westerns with the assembled authors and editors: he had discovered, he said, that Western authors are doing some of the best writing in the whole of American literature, and that they are being treated shabbily by publishers—far worse than the authors in any other category, or those writing mainstream fiction. Mr. Sobel was correct. Some remarkable novels are being written in the Western field by novelists who would be celebrated for their abilities if they were writing in any other genre.

There are two basic types of Westerns: the romantic (or mythic) and the realistic. Neither is in any danger of extinction, although the mythic Western is currently in decline. The mythic story is not really about the West, but about character. It is rarely set in a geography of actual places. The frontier and its lawlessness and hardships serve merely to focus the story on the protagonist's strengths and weaknesses. The mythic story is largely an affirmation: in the end, justice is done and good triumphs and the manliness, courage, and integrity of the hero prevail. These stories are lightly researched and could be set most anyplace—not just the American West. Max Brand, Luke Short, and Louis L'Amour wrote mythic stories, along with the majority of Western novelists.

The other type is about the frontier West itself. It is intensively researched and essentially a historical novel. Its protagonists do not necessarily triumph, and are likely to be flawed. They certainly don't serve the mythic purpose of affirming our national character. These stories tend to be more complex, reflecting the human condition in all its tragedy and triumph. These realistic Western novels are on the ascendant and may dominate the genre in the future. Many Western novelists have written both types. Jack Schaefer, for instance, wrote the classic mythic story *Shane*, and a powerful realistic novel of the West, *Monte Walsh*.

It is worth noting that the mythic Western is the variety that has come under attack. The mythic Western offers a vision of American manhood that many find intolerable. Even more intolerable to them is the underlying message: that it is possible for strong people to work out their own salvation, largely by adhering to traditional norms of conduct and belief. If the minions of the Modern Language Association attack such stories with amazing vehemence, it is because they fully understand the grip that these Homeric stories have upon the soul of the nation. Some of the criticism is certainly justified.

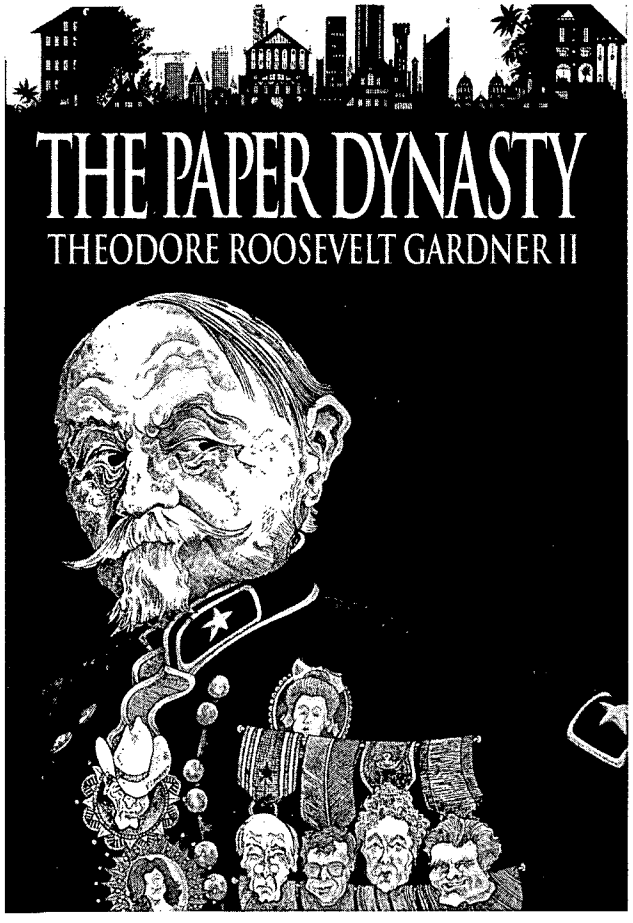
The women typically found in the mythic Western are sketchy and subservient, and the mythic story is often dismissive of the Indians who were displaced by the onslaught of white civilization. But I suspect that the most important reason why the critics despise the mythic Western is simply that it celebrates a glorious, bold, and enterprising America. It celebrates the grandeur and uniqueness of the Republic.

The future of the Western is not in doubt, unless its detractors take the final step by resorting to censorship. Many of those who wish to abolish the Western have brushed close to advocating that ultimate weapon, and Professor Kittredge fervently wishes Westerns would go away. Perhaps some day Westerns will be sold under the counter, the way Henry Miller was fifty or sixty years ago. But I think it is more likely that the day of the fanatics will pass, and Westerns will return to eminence, cherished by Americans in all walks of life. Once, not so long ago, Westerns were a source of national joy; they were our unique contribution to world literature (some would argue that the hardboiled private eye story is also an original American contribution). Westerns were once published by the most prestigious houses, including Alfred Knopf, and serialized weekly in the *Saturday Evening Post* and other magazines. That sort of popularity and acceptance may not return, but whenever Americans feel good about their country, you'll see a reemergence of the Western.

Richard S. Wheeler is the author of over twenty Westerns. He lives in Big Timber, Montana.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE ULTIMATE HOW-TO BOOK



14 and more HOW-TO books wrapped in one beautiful binding. Read it to improve your life!

Learn How to:

- ✔ ... reverse the politics of a leading newspaper.
- ✔ ... beat the unions.
- ✔ ... make a fortune in real estate.
- ✔ ... do inside trading within the law.
- ✔ ... reap success from failure after 40.
- ✔ ... buy a newspaper from a man who doesn't want to sell — when you are broke.
- ✔ ... buy a house with no down payment.
- ✔ ... marry the boss's daughter when the boss hates you.
- ✔ ... build a music center after legions have failed.
- ✔ ... get a stubborn husband to change his mind.
- ✔ ... build one of the world's leading cities from a cow town.
- ✔ ... move your business from a sorry competitor to total dominance of the market.
- ✔ ... get a job you thought was rightfully yours after it was given to someone else.
- ✔ ... get a job in top management if the owner can't stand you.

An explosive novel of enormous HOW-TO proportions.

Crackling entertainment.[1] ... informative and spellbinding.[2] As much fun as a highminded gossip column.[3] ...enjoyed it from beginning to end ...if you like saga stories, and newspapers, don't miss this.[4] Outrageous metaphors...massive and memorable characters ... simply good reading.[5] ...vituperative attack on the Los Angeles Times newspaper and its founding family...intriguing novel.[6] ...not very good.[7]

1. Publishers Weekly 2. St. Joseph, Missouri *News-Press/Gazette* 3. Los Angeles Copley's *Daily Breeze* 4. Oklahoma *Tribune Review* 5. *Idaho Press* 6. *Pasadena Star-News* 7. *Los Angeles Times*

600 pages, $23.45 ISBN 0-9627297-0-1
At your favorite bookstore or phone:
(800) 777-7623, fax:(213) 544-3545

ALLEN A. KNOLL, PUBLISHERS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Are You Fed Up With the One-Party System in Washington, D.C. ?

If multi-party politics is a good idea for Eastern Europe and South Africa, why not try it here in America?

Help build a ...

U.S. TAXPAYERS PARTY *... with a new agenda for America!*

- **Constitutional Budget:** We need more than a balanced budget. Disapprove any and all Federal expenditures which are not specifically authorized in the U.S. Constitution.
- **Equal Taxation:** The income tax is not only an insidious invasion of privacy — it is totally unnecessary to cover constitutional spending requirements. Equality before the law should not depend on what you earn or what you pay.
- **Institutional Reform:** Our goal is a depoliticized, degovernmentalized society with market accountability. Government regulation and subsidy diminishes liberty. To the degree that government exercises legitimate authority, political accountability is essential: electoral, bureaucratic, and judicial. We favor tenure limits, elimination of pensions for elected officials, and an end to special advantages for Big Media.
- **Religious Liberty and Constitutional Rights:** Jefferson correctly warned that "to compel a man to furnish funds for the propagation of ideas he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical." We will terminate advocacy subsidies of all kinds, including Federal funding of education, while preserving every word of the Bill of Rights: private property rights and freedom of association shall not be diminished. The right to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.
- **American Nationalism:** We say "no" to the New World Order. Withdraw from unaccountable supranational institutions — UN, IMF, World Bank, etc. Terminate special privileges for central banks and multi-national corporations. Deploy SDI. End foreign aid, except to protect vital U.S. security interests. Rebuild U.S. industrial strength with deregulation and abolition of corporate taxes.

PRAGMATISM DOESN'T WORK!

America is in trouble, and the politics of conventional ambition and political pragmatism are not working.

We face crises which are, at once, economic, geostrategic, institutional, and, above all, moral. The dumbing-down of school textbooks, the insidious vulgarity conveyed on television, and the degrading humanist culture portrayed and purveyed on our movie screens has helped produce a nation of sheep, spectators who reject the very premises of our nation's Godly heritage, and who too often lack the discernment, or knowledge of history, to reject the incremental, escalating, political confiscation of our individual liberties and national autonomy.

Time is not on our side. Time is running out. If you want to do something about it, join in launching a new movement which has the potential to slow the tide, and to turn it.

Our strategy is simple, but effective: to establish a party of principle which will have the option of withholding political support from either or both major political parties whenever it is determined that ***the lesser of two evils can be the worst outcome of all.***

Politicians like to win elections. If they need us to win, and if our price is not personal power, patronage, or payoffs, they will be forced to reward us in the currency of policy and principle—or suffer the consequences.

But our objective is more profound than to merely achieve victory or defeat in particular electoral contests. Our goal is to recast the entire dialectic of American politics away from humanistic, socialist materialism, and back in the direction of Biblical, constitutional liberty.

- "No" to the New World Order
- Abolition of the IRS and the income tax system
- Judicial accountability
- "No" to the UN, IMF, and World Bank
- Execution or restitution to fight crime
- "No" to abortion
- Term limitation
- No bailout of Gorbachev
- Abolition of civil service
- No fiat money
- Withdrawal from entangling international financial, political, and military alliances
- No transfers of resources and technology to America's enemies
- Deploy SDI
- "No" to gun control
- Reverse government restrictions on the development of U.S. energy resources
- "No" to pensions for elected officials
- Eliminate special political privileges for media moguls
- No government-guaranteed loans, investments, or banking arrangements
- Restore control of Federal elections to the state and local level
- "No" to environmental extremism
- End the Social Security tax
- "No" to U.S.-funded education
- Transfer Social Security contributions to individually protected private retirement accounts
- "No" to statehood for D.C.
- Abolish Federal regulatory commissions
- "No" to quotas
- Reduce Federal government land ownership and use restrictions
- "No" to pro-homosexual subsidies and regulations
- Abolish the FEC
- Private charity — not government welfare

HELP MAKE HISTORY! *JOIN THE UNITED STATES TAXPAYERS ALLIANCE*

I want to help implement the USTA strategy for conservative victory and build a U.S. Taxpayers Party.

- ❑ by helping achieve ballot qualification
- ❑ by becoming or recruiting a candidate
- ❑ by contributing funds. Enclosed is my check, payable to USTA, for:
  - ❑ $75 (students $25) — USTA **Charter Membership**
  - ❑ $1000 — Member, USTA **National Committee**
  - ❑ $10,000 — Member, USTA **Executive Committee**
  - ❑ Or: ❑ $25 ❑ $100 ❑ $250 ❑ $5000 ❑ other $
  - ❑ Please charge my credit card: ❑ MasterCard ❑ Visa
    Account number: _____ Exp: _____
    Cardholder's Signature: _____
- ❑ Please send more information about your proposal, strategy, and principles. Enclosed is a check for $25.
- ❑ Please keep me on your mailing list
- ❑ Please notify me of training workshops and conventions

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (optional) (___) _____

CHR

U.S. TAXPAYERS ALLIANCE

450 Maple Avenue, East
Vienna, Virginia 22180

The IRS has determined the USTA to be a 501(c)4 organization, exempt from Federal income tax. Contributions to the USTA are not tax deductable. Corporate and individual donations are welcome in any amount.

"You have been sold out by both major political parties.

"How much longer will you put up with it?

"Join me as a charter member of the U. S. Taxpayers Alliance, and help me put America back on the right track."

— Howard Phillips

My name is Howard Phillips, and I ask you to help me give America a new birth of freedom.

Since 1974, I've led The Conservative Caucus (TCC), a non-profit policy action group which has fought for **less government, traditional American values, and victory over Communism.**

For more than 30 years, I've been working against a corrupt cultural, financial, and political establishment which rejects the heritage of American liberty and has set our beloved country on a track to disaster.

During the Nixon Administration, as head of two U.S. government agencies—I got a solid four-year education in just how badly the Federal government is permeated with waste, corruption, moral cowardice, and destructive ideological activism.

As director of the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), I made enemies of whom I remain proud, as I battled to terminate grants and contracts which were being used as ideological patronage for the radical Left—and fought to erase "Great Society"-era regulations which had been carefully crafted to insulate from electoral accountability a national network of well-paid neo-Marxist organizations.

After a decade of Reagan and Bush, the Washington-based conservative movement is at a dead end. Grass roots supporters have grown weary of the battle, frustrated by political betrayal, and seemingly impotent to achieve significant victories on issues they care about.

Those who control the government have been only marginally inconvenienced by anti-establishment protest — because, in the context of the present two-party system, "fed up" Americans have "no place else" to go on election day.

With your help, that will change in 1992, and voters across America will have an effective means to "throw the rascals out".

That's why I urge you to join me in launching a new U.S. Taxpayers Party.

OUR GOAL: *To launch, in time for the 1992 elections, a new political party which advances principles and policy objectives consistent with the Bible and the Constitution of the United States, whose purpose, both by fielding its own candidates, and by co-endorsing, where appropriate, candidates of other parties, is to establish, in the context of the American political process, a right standard for civil government and an electoral rallying point for those who, in agreement with our purposes, choose to join us.*

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: *We proceed from the premise that the only legitimate purpose of civil government is to safeguard our God-given rights to life, liberty, and property.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED